INDIA AND ITS FAITHS

A Traveler's Record

JAMES BISSETT PRATT

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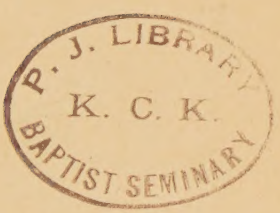

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INDIA
AND ITS FAITHS

A TRAVELER'S RECORD

By JAMES BISSETT PRATT, Ph.D.

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AUTHOR OF
"THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF"
"WHAT IS PRAGMATISM?"

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TO MY DEAR COMRADE
IN INDIA AND IN LIFE
AT WHOSE SUGGESTION THIS BOOK WAS BEGUN
AND BY WHOSE ASSISTANCE IT WAS
COMPLETED

12322

"Passage O soul to India!
Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.
Not you alone, proud truths of the world,
Nor you alone, ye facts of modern science,
But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables,
The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,
The deep diving bibles and legends,
The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions;
O you temples fairer than lilies pour'd over by the rising sun!
O you fables spurning the known, eluding the hold of the known, mounting to heaven!

"Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,
Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,
The young maturity of brood and bloom,
To realms of budding bibles.

"Passage to more than India!
Are thy wings plumed indeed for such far flights?
O soul, voyagest thou indeed on voyages like those?
Disportest thou on waters such as those?
Soundest below the Sanscrit and the Vedas?
Then have thy bent unleash'd.
Passage to you, your shores, ye aged fierce enigmas!
Passage to you, to mastership of you, ye strangling problems!
You, strew'd with the wrecks of skeletons, that, living, never reach'd you.
Passage to more than India!"

WALT WHITMAN.

PREFACE

IF there is room for a new book on India and its faiths, that certainly is not due to any lack of learned and excellent treatments of the subject already obtainable. And the only excuse I shall offer for adding to a long list is that I have sought to deal with the subject from a point of view different from that of most writers, and that I have found my interest centering on aspects of India's religious life not often emphasized in our books upon that land. I am neither a Sanskritist nor a missionary nor a convert to some Oriental cult; and that perhaps constitutes my chief qualification for writing on India. For I have had no axe to grind, and my interest has been centered on existing conditions, on present-day ideas and their significance, and on the methods used by the different communities of India for religious education and religious reform. In spite, therefore, of the many excellent works that have been written on India, I conceive that there is still a place for a book whose author's preparation for his task has been, not in Sanskrit or missionary literature, but in the study of the general problems of the psychology and philosophy of religion, and who seeks to present Indian religious life as it is to-day, without partisanship or antecedent bias. When I started for India it was with no thought of writing a book on the land and its faiths, but to gain fresh light on the psychology of religion —a subject that had interested me for a dozen years. Before I had been long in the country, however, I found I had collected, from observation and from conversation with all sorts of people, a considerable amount of information concerning the religions of India which seemed to me most interesting and which I, at least, had not found in books; and my wife suggested that what had brought new insight to me might be of interest to others also. Hence the writing of this book.

It is only right that I should here express my indebtedness to a number of friends and acquaintances without whose assistance this book would not have been worth writing. Most of

all am I indebted to my wife, whose quick eyes caught many an Indian scene which but for her I should have missed, whose criticism and suggestion have been my most trusted guides, and who through many hours of patient work typewrote my manuscript and made a large part of my index. Much of my information, beside that gleaned from books and periodicals, I owe to the following gentlemen whose acquaintance I made in India: the Reverend W. B. Stover, of Ankleshvar; Mr. Jivanji Jamshedji Modi and Mr. Aderji, of Bombay; Mr. Lala Hansraj and Principal Lala San Das, of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College in Lahore, and Professor S. C. Sen, of the Dyal Singh College in the same city; Mr. Ajit Prasada, of Lucknow; Mr. Kumar Devendra Prasad, of Allahabad; Mr. Bhagavan Das and Dr. Toreporawalla, of the Central Hindu College, Professor Mulvaney of Queen's College, the Reverend Mr. Johnson, the Reverend Mr. Cape, the Reverend Father Joachim, Mr. Seyed, Mr. Khalil-er-Rahman, all of Benares; Dr. D. B. Spooner and Dr. Syed Mahmud, of Bankipur; Dr. Satish Chandra Vidyabhushan, Dr. J. C. Bose, Mr. Shivanath Shastri, and Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal, of Calcutta; Professors St. John, Smith, and Roberts, of the Rangoon Baptist College in Rangoon; Mr. Taw Shin Ko and Bhikku U Nyana, of Mandalay; Mr. Harasgama, of Matale (Ceylon); Mr. Dharmapala and Dr. Hewavitarna, of Colombo; and Dr. Jacobi, of Bonn, Germany.

I made the acquaintance of these gentlemen while Mrs. Pratt and I were traveling in India during the autumn, winter, and spring of 1913–14. And my gratitude is due not only to them, but to the scores of other Indians who, whether pundits or coolies, treated us with unfailing courtesy and real kindness. If one rushes through India one may indeed depart with little liking for India's swarming millions. But it is hard for me to conceive how one can stay any time among them without finding them a truly lovable people and without imbibing genuine respect and admiration for the simple dignity of their lives, the quiet courtesy of their manners, their uncomplaining endurance of hardships, their unbounded hospitality, and the feeling for spiritual values which, in spite of gross superstitions, is unmistakable in the Indian atmosphere. These things — or, rather, the memory of them — strike one, perhaps, most for-

cibly after his return from the East to the familiar sights and sounds of Western civilization. For my part, at any rate, in the rush of our city streets and the complacent satisfaction of our beer-gardens and our moving-picture shows, and amid the descriptions of war and hate and horror that fill every day's reports from Europe, I find myself thinking of the banks of the Ganges and the silent monasteries of Burma; just as I shall tell myself, in the midst of the snows and piercing winds which our coming New England winter is already preparing for us, that the Irrawaddy is still pursuing its course to the sea between groves of flowering trees and banks crowned with golden pagodas, and that the roses are still blooming in Benares.

JAMES BISSETT PRATT.

WILLIAMSTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS,
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INDIA AND ITS FAITHS

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CHAPTER I

ON AVOIDING MISUNDERSTANDINGS

NO, I'm very sure he's a heathen polytheist like the rest of them. *He* does n't believe in the One God."

"But, madam, his verses certainly sound as if he did. And you yourself said just now that some of them are filled with genuine religious feeling."

"I know they are; that's the surprising thing about them. I can't understand it at all. But Tagore has many English friends, and it must be that some of them made this selection from his verses -- and probably changed them considerably too. You can be sure all of his poems that are *not* translated into English are about Ganesha and Shiva and the rest, and that he himself worships a lot of horrid idols when at home. They're all alike, these heathen. I've lived among them for twenty-two years and I know!"

We were on the steamer bound for Bombay, and all the passengers except our two selves had lived in India for years — most of them for twenty-two years — and were returning there from a visit or a furlough. Every one we met knew all about India and the Indians, so I was making use of my opportunity to learn something from them. The missionary, whose judgment I had learned to respect, did not agree with the lady. He said that many Indians of his acquaintance believed in and worshiped the one God. But the other missionary added that, though this might be true in one sense, it did n't do them any good, for they did n't acknowledge the Blessed Trinity; and without doing that who *could* be saved?

Meanwhile I was reading the books of Sister Nivedita, and learning from them that the Indians were the only people who had retained genuine spiritual religion of the deepest sort, that the caste system merely meant *Noblesse oblige*, and that

the use of idols was really a great aid in spiritual worship and ought, apparently, to be introduced into Europe. Somewhat puzzled by all this I went with it to the little English major — a charming fellow — who sat next me at table.

"Oh, you're interested in that stuff!" he said. "Well, you'll find enough of it in India. All the natives want to talk religion to you till you get beastly tired of it, don't you know. When my Mohammedan officers start telling me about their Vishnu and Krishna and all their other gods —"

"But the Mohammedans don't believe in these gods — the Mohammedans have only one God. It's the Hindus who worship Vishnu and the rest."

"Oh, it's the Hindus, is it? Well, anyhow, they're all pretty much alike, and I've got 'em trained now so that they know jolly well I don't want to hear any of their religious rot."

There was a young Hindu on board, but my success in questioning him was not brilliant. As I learned later, he did not represent the majority of his fellow countrymen. He did represent, however, an increasing minority of the young men who have been brought up by liberal-minded Hindu parents and have been sent abroad to finish their education. This boy was seventeen and was returning from Germany where he had been studying engineering; and either in the land of Kant or elsewhere he certainly had acquired a rather unusual power of suspended judgment. When I asked him what religion he belonged to, he responded proudly, "I am an Aryan." Asked if he meant by this the Arya Samaj, he looked puzzled and said, "No." Concerning his religious faith he said, "I believe to find out what is good and do that thing. I don't know about the rest. Some say one thing, some another, but all agree on *that*, and that is my religion so far. Some day I may find out more, but not yet. What I find out by myself, that is my religion." When I asked him what he had been taught about God and about worship, he said that as a small boy he had attended a Christian school for a time, then a school of some other religion — he could n't remember what — and had heard a lot of things about God and that sort of thing, but had n't understood any of it and did n't remember any of it. Asked what he thought of the temple worship he had seen in India, he said he did n't

know. Some people said one thing about God, some another. Some said God dwelt in images and at times spoke through certain men. He did n't know. He had seen men sit around a sweet-smelling fire and jump up in a wild state, so that whatever you asked them they could tell you: but whether they told the truth at such times he did n't know. And when I asked which were the better, the Hindus or the Mohammedans, he said that as he himself had been brought up a Hindu he could n't give an opinion.

So, as I have already remarked, my success in learning religion from my young Hindu friend was not signal: but, at any rate, I admired his suspense of judgment, and resolved to imitate it and to form no opinion of my own till reaching India and seeing for myself.

When one lands in Bombay, the East bursts upon one like the rise of an Oriental sun — which, as every one knows, comes up like thunder in these parts. One feels that he has never seen color before. The streets are alive with it on turban, coat, skirt, loose-flowing trousers, loin-cloth, sari, and bronze and chocolate skin: while jewelry of every description hangs from nose and ear, and encircles neck, arm, fingers, ankles, and toes. A never-ending stream of every caste and religion passes by one with the silence of patient, naked feet. Those with the caste marks so carefully painted on their foreheads are Hindus, while the men with the strange headgear are Parsees, and most of the bearded men are Mohammedans. Then there are a few Jainas too, and an occasional Sikh. The scene is bewildering and it grows the more complex as one's familiarity with it increases. But more bewildering than the costume, color, and caste of this multitude are the religions which they embody. Who shall understand these? How shall one come to any intelligent judgment upon the faith of India?

The first lesson that one should learn is that any such judgment upon the "Faith of India" as a whole is impossible. Like other countries, and even more than other countries, India is a land of contrasts — a land of low plains and lofty mountains, of heat and cold, of wealth and poverty, beauty and ugliness, cleanliness of person and filthiness of clothes. In the spiritual sphere the contrasts are even greater, so that it is impossible

to *lump* the Indians and say, They are all idolaters; or, They are all spiritual. To the reader this must seem an absurdly unnecessary and perfectly obvious statement: and yet one will meet with people who insist that they know India, and yet who seem incapable of differentiating between the Vedanta philosopher and the magic-fearing sweeper or the animistic Bihl. In no other country are there so many different religions or such great contrasts of intellectual level. Hence nowhere else is it so necessary to make distinctions and so dangerous to indulge in sweeping general assertions.

And, more in particular, there are four points of view, or perhaps I should say four possible sources of information, which he who would understand the religions of India should regard with caution. Against the first of these I need hardly warn the reader — the point of view, namely, of the native himself. Naturally one must not believe everything that one is told by the Indians in praise of their own religion — some of their statements go well with a little salt. Like the adherents of other authoritative religions, they naturally believe that theirs is the only one truly inspired, and some of the more educated will attempt to explain away its objectionable features by a free use of the allegorical method. And some of them, out of sheer loyalty to their faith, will refuse to admit the existence of evils with which they are really well acquainted. But even if the defender of a religion does not categorically deny the existence of certain of its evils, he may, at least, — especially if writing a book, — carefully avoid making any mention of them. This is natural enough and is to be seen in many defenders of Christianity and its various churches and sects. Hence, if Vivekananda and other cultured Indians, in their books on Hinduism, fail to mention anything in it that is unworthy, but paint it all white, one should not blame them; but one should not stop with them.

This trait of telling the truth but not the whole truth is a little more surprising and a little more misleading in those European writers who seek to give an ultra-"sympathetic" picture of India and whose point of view is the second of the four against which I would warn the reader. Sister Nivedita (Margaret E. Noble) and Fielding Hall are representative of

the best type of these, and Mrs. Besant of the worst. Of the latter something shall be said in another place, but of Sister Nivedita a word here. Whoever wishes to understand the India of to-day should read her books — particularly "The Web of Indian Life." Probably no one else has succeeded so happily in presenting the finer side of Indian family life, social relationships, and religious ideals. But as one turns her fascinating pages one is uncertain whether to wonder most at her insight into all that is best or her blindness for all that is worst in India. Any one who has seen the unlovely aspect of Hindu temple worship — even in her own beloved Bengal — must feel considerable amazement at what she and others like her find in it of vision and inspiration. But perhaps the secret is partly given in one of her own sentences: "Living in a Calcutta lane, the powers of the imagination revive"! And with natures as beautiful and devoted as was Miss Noble's, the powers of the imagination and of loving sympathy not only revive and heal and bless, but sometimes also mislead.

Yet sympathy like Miss Noble's is essential to perfect insight; only, we should not stop with it. And in fact there is little danger of most of us doing that. Much greater is the danger that we, with our Western ideals and customs so different from those of India, should go to the other extreme and take one of the two remaining points of view that I referred to above. One of these is that which characterizes a certain type (now happily decreasing) of earnest but narrow-minded missionary. To people of this sort — whether in the "foreign field" or at home — "Christianity" is "true," hence all other religions are "false." And this being the case, one's chief duty is felt to be the demonstration that all "heathen" customs and beliefs are bad. The old-fashioned method of doing this, as all my readers will remember, was to paint in lurid hues all evils discoverable in the "heathen" religion, and to shut one's eyes diligently to everything good in it. Most of us, I suppose, were brought up to believe that throwing their children to the crocodiles in the Ganges was the daily entertainment of most Indian women. But I need say no more concerning the old-fashioned missionary book, which is so familiar to us all, and from which our general Western idea of India up till quite recently was so

largely derived. The modern missionary book and the modern missionary, I am glad to say, are usually of a quite different type. Yet enough books and men and women of the old sort are left to make it important to be on the alert against their partial statements. As a rule what they say and write is perfectly true; but they give only half the picture. To mention only one book of this sort — the Abbé Dubois's "Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies" is one of the most valuable treatises ever written on India. Nowhere else can one get so reliable and detailed an account of Indian life and customs from first-hand observation. Nearly every positive statement in the book is true; just as nearly every positive statement in Sister Nivedita's "Web of Indian Life" is true.[1] Yet the general impressions one carries away from the two books are about as different as the impressions one has after reading the "Inferno" and the "Paradiso." Each book is needed as an antidote to the other. Unfortunately I found many of the European residents of India well versed in the abbé's book, but few had taken any antidote; and as a result they were convinced that immorality constituted the chief form of worship in Hinduism, that all Brahmins were either fools or knaves, and that Indian thought in general was utter nonsense.

And this brings me to the fourth source of information which one should regard somewhat askance — namely, the assertions of the superficial tourist or the non-missionary European resident in India. This source is particularly dangerous, for it is so natural to suppose that one of our own race who has traveled in India (and especially one who has lived there "twenty-two years") will be in a position to know all about it. They usually think so themselves. It is the commonest thing to meet with tourists who, having spent a month or less in India, having visited two temples and the bathing and burning ghats, and having made the acquaintance of a few servants at the hotels and a few coolies at the stations, are on their way home to tell

[1] Both of these books have geographical limitations as well as initial prejudices. Sister Nivedita's personal observation is mostly confined to Bengal, while the abbé's facts were almost entirely gathered in southern India. In addition to this one must remember that the abbé's book was written one hundred years ago.

their friends that they have seen India and that its inhabitants are all degraded worshipers of stocks and stones.

The tourist's ignorance is not surprising. But it is not easy to understand the ignorance of the average European resident in India. Surely no one can go to the East and fail to admire the universal peace, the impartial justice, and the efficient administration that England is giving India. I believe no other nation could govern India so well, and this, I think, is the opinion of the Indians themselves. The English judge is always just, the English civil servant is unbribable, faithful, and efficient, the English official is universally regarded as the defender of the poor; and the almost pathetic confidence manifested by the "natives" everywhere in India toward all European tourists speaks eloquently for the honesty and fair-dealing of the English residents of the land. If through any chance of war India should change masters, it would be nothing short of a calamity for the Indian. And yet with all this, it must be admitted that there are in the Englishman certain peculiarities of temperament which constantly rub the superior Indian the wrong way, and which largely explain the "Indian unrest" that has been so widely advertised through the world. To sum up in one word the root of the difficulty, the Anglo-Indian is surprisingly indifferent toward almost everything native. There are, of course, many glorious exceptions. The English missionaries, for instance, are not only intensely interested, but as a rule well informed as to the ideas and ideals of the people to whom they minister so devotedly. And the English civil servants and business men are well acquainted with those sides of Indian life with which they come in contact in the performance of their duties. But as to Indian thought, religion, traditions, and ways of viewing things, most of the Englishmen I met seemed to me singularly lacking in curiosity or interest. The European colony lives by itself at one end of the town, forming a little England, and (except for its servants) having no more to do with the native life than has some town in Kent or Sussex. The whole colony will turn out to see a hundred English soldiers from the garrison march past; but a hundred thousand natives may come on a pilgrimage to the town, forming a scene which for color and picturesqueness is hardly to be

matched, and not a sahib or memsahib will step out of the bungalow to see it. Many, in fact, seem to think that any such interest in the "natives" would be derogatory to their dignity and quite unworthy of a white man.

No one has more admiration than I for the many admirable qualities of our British cousins nor for the devotion with which numbers of them are giving their lives to India; yet I cannot help feeling at least amused at the odd provincialism which many of them so naïvely manifest. I remember one in Venice who insisted that the trouble with coffee and rolls was not that it was a *poor* breakfast, but that it *was n't* a breakfast; for a breakfast consists of meat and potatoes. To the Englishman of this type there are not various possible opinions or points of view, some better, some worse; there is only one point of view, namely, his. It is this peculiar lack of imagination that makes dear old John Bull so positive, so straightforward, and so amusing: it has never occurred to him (as William James would have put it) that the Indians "have insides of their own."

This indifference and persistent provincialism makes the typical Briton quite blind to much that is fine in Indian society. Thus, one English gentleman whom I met — a man who had lived in Calcutta and other parts of the East for years — said to me: "The natives are all just a lot of animals; don't you think so?" I answered that my impression was quite different; that, for instance, just the week before I had in Calcutta made the acquaintance of two Indian gentlemen — namely Dr. Bose, and Tagore the poet — who, compared with many of us Anglo-Saxons, were intellectual giants. At this he was greatly astonished and asked who Dr. Bose might be. I told him that Dr. Bose was one of the greatest botanists living, a man whose discoveries are known over all the world, and who has been invited to lecture at American and German universities and before the Royal Society in London.

"I never heard of him," replied the Englishman: "but I have heard of Tagore, the man who got the Nobel Prize. — But I don't think much of his poetry; do you?"

To my response that I thought a great deal of Tagore's poetry, he ejaculated: —

"Well, really! However, I suppose there must be something

in it since he got the Nobel Prize. But it can't be really poetry, you know; because it *does n't rhyme.*"

This lack of interest in native life as such, and the proud manifestation of conscious superiority that goes with it, shows itself in the coarser natures in a contempt for the "black man" and a constant swagger of putting him in his place. "How do you like the Indians?" I asked a traveling salesman of this type, who told me that he had lived most of his life in the East. "How do I like 'em?" was the reply. "I 'd like to expectorate in their eyes." Vulgar brutality of this sort is not common: but most Englishmen take good care that all "natives" shall realize the immense abyss that extends between them and the superior race of sahibs. To keep this impressed steadily upon the native, no Englishman in India will carry anything in public; and one often comes upon the rather amusing picture of a big athletic sahib pacing through the middle of the street (if, indeed, he walks at all), a big stick in one hand and nothing in the other, while a diminutive native follows humbly after "Master," carrying a small book. A sahib could not carry anything so large as a book — far be it from him! For (with rare exceptions) every Englishman, big or little, that you meet in India takes himself and his position very seriously, and seems to feel that the dignity of the Empire rests upon his shoulders and that Great Britain would be dishonored if he should for a moment forget, or allow any one else to forget, the proper distance between him and all natives. To maintain the Heaven-decreed preëminence of the Briton over all black men and heathen is his first obligation; and he is always mindful of the fact that England expects every man to do his duty.

As a result of this indifference to and contempt for the natives, most of the Anglo-Indians that I know anything about are very ignorant concerning the religions of India and decidedly prejudiced against them. Personally, I think that the opinions of nine Englishmen out of ten on the subject of Indian religions are entirely untrustworthy. For the most part, such opinions seem to be formed at home and brought out to India, based on the talk of predecessors equally ignorant, and retained without substantial revision and even without questioning. Many of these Englishmen — most of them — are splendid

fellows; yet their prepossession that no good thing can come out of Nazareth is so strong that when they come in contact with an Indian who is head and shoulders their intellectual superior they remain sublimely ignorant of the fact, and keep on insisting to the end of their days that they never met a native who could think. What might be called a symbolic illustration of this interesting state of mind came to me at Agra. We met there a Scotch trained nurse who had spent years in India and had lived in most of the hill stations. "Do tell us about the Himalayas!" said my wife to her. "Umph, the Himalayas," she responded; "of course they are very high. But for grandeur they can't compare with the Highlands of Scotland."

This dissertation of mine on the four points of view to be avoided has been, perhaps, unpardonably long. But if one is to understand the religion of a people it is necessary to approach it in the right way. Knowledge is necessary, but knowledge alone is not sufficient. It is so easy, on the one hand, to be enthusiastically "sympathetic"; so easy also to be morally indignant or complacently superior; and so hard to be just.

Besides these four suspicious sources of information, or points of view, there is a rather common method of judging religions other than one's own which also ought to be avoided. This method, which I suspect is commoner than most of us think, consists in comparing the actual practice of the foreign religion with the ideal side of our own. We are constantly asserting that our actual Christianity falls far short of what it means to be; we remind ourselves that there neither is nor ever has been a really Christian nation or community. But we do not stop to ask if there ever has been or is now a really Mohammedan or Hindu or Zoroastrian or Buddhist community or nation. We are indignant if our Western vices are laid to the charge of Christianity; yet we are sometimes eager to point out that drunkenness exists in Mohammedan communities. And if some Moslem reminds us that drinking is strictly forbidden by the Koran, we respond, "Ah, but we must judge your religion not by what it professes, but by what it does." Or one may often hear assertions like this: "Yes, Buddhism probably has certain fine features; but the *Buddhists* do not live up to their religion!" It would be well for us to meditate occa-

sionally on the exclamation of the Russian Jewess, reported by Mary Antin: "I did not know that a *Christian* could be kind."

But perhaps the greatest of all obstacles in the way of a just appreciation of a strange religion is to be found in the matter of worship. None of us, I suppose, are aware how thoroughly provincial we are on this point. In spite of all our fine sentiments and liberal ideas, most of us really feel about worship as the Englishman felt about breakfast: there is only one kind and that is our kind. When we go for the first time into a Hindu temple we all feel a strong sense of disgust and usually little else. I believe that much of this disgust is justified. It may be my own ineradicable provincialism that makes me believe so. But I am sure that there are present in the temple worship elements that we do not see, elements that are hidden from us by the shock of surprise and novelty and contrast. Such small details as the fact that a drum is used instead of an organ, that Indian music is different from European music, that Indian art is different from European art, and that the language of the ritual is to us unknown — these are enough to make many a tourist turn away with the conviction that Hindu ceremonies are *all* "mummery" or "devil worship." The gong and the drum and the chanting issuing from the temple sound strange and "outlandish" to us, and we at once feel a sense of fear, and conjure up a picture, perhaps, of human sacrifice or of "magic rites" (whatever these may be!) — and draw our conclusions as to the heathen. We strangers and onlookers see the outside only and forget that there is any *inside*. A recent Hindu writer points out a similar case reported in the Mahabharata, only here it was the Indian traveler who observed — and misinterpreted — a Christian ceremony. It was early in our era that this Indian tourist was present at a communion service in a Christian church in Asia Minor. He came away and described the Christians as a people who "ate up the God they worshiped." Mr. Bepin Chandra Pal, from whom I take this, adds: "Seen with the eye alone, this is a faithful description of the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist. . . . The writer saw from the outside: cognized with his senses certain physical acts of the Christian worshipers. He had not the right key to

the interpretation of these outer acts. He put his own meaning on these in the light of his own peculiar experience. What he saw was a fact, yet how misleading is his interpretation of what he had seen. And the story illustrates very clearly the general character of the interpretations put upon our life and institutions by European scholars and students." [1]

A little consideration and a little reflection on our own experience at home surely should free us from this blunder. The Protestant who for the first time attends a Catholic mass comes away feeling it is all "mummery"; for the very good reason that it is so different from a Protestant service. The congregation does n't sing hymns and the priest does n't "lead" in a "long prayer"; and surely a "service" without "congregational singing" and "the long prayer" is no more a service than breakfast without meat and potatoes is, for the Englishman, a breakfast. Yet, when the Protestant comes better to understand the mass, he finds that its "mummery" is to hundreds of earnest souls the most sacred of symbols, and that though the priest does not "lead in prayer," the congregation is praying none the less, and with a fervor and earnestness perhaps not notably inferior to that which marks the usual mind-wandering of a Protestant audience. In like manner we should remind ourselves that the very "outlandishness" of the Hindu, Buddhist, or Jaina worship may hide from us what to the kneeling worshipers is the most precious symbol of the Divine.

And here we touch the very heart of the difficulty, the cause of most of the spiritual blindness that separates peoples of different faiths. We do not understand one another's *symbols*, and we seldom try. And this is partly because we have not stopped to consider the tremendous importance of symbolism in religion, its universality, and the method of its growth. If we should all realize in what varied forms the same truth or the same emotional attitude may be symboled forth, there would be less mutual recrimination between followers of different faiths.

It takes years for a symbol to gain its full force over an individual or a race. One must grow up with it. It gathers its

[1] *The Soul of India* (Calcutta, Choudhury, 1911), pp. 13–14.

strength from the whole life and the whole environment. It does not greatly matter what the symbol is: anything will do provided it has by the steady growth of a lifetime and by the aid of the whole social environment drawn around itself the spiritual attitudes and sentiments which the race most prizes. Thus, it takes a whole life thoroughly to understand a symbol: from which it follows that one can never completely understand the full force and the emotional meaning and value of a symbol belonging to a strange people and a strange culture. In symbolism we all tend to be extremely provincial. We insist that other peoples shall adopt *our* symbols, without realizing that our symbols may be as strange and incomprehensible to them as theirs are to us. We cannot understand how any one can find strength or comfort in Kali, the great Hindu Mother, with her string of skulls and her bloody mouth. We see the Hindu deities presented with from four to ten arms, and we say they look like spiders and must be horrid; not realizing that to the Hindus these many arms mean the all-enfolding powers of the Divine. And it never occurs to us that the Indian would find it hard to appreciate some of our emblems and figures of speech. To say nothing of the strange symbolism of early Christian art, — the fish and the various beasts to which we have grown accustomed, — consider our present constant emphasis upon *blood* — the picture of moral guilt being "washed away" by the application of blood,[1] etc. Then there are the various symbols connected with the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" — "the Lamb upon the Throne, crowned with many crowns." (Try to visualize the picture!) There is also the trefoil representing the Trinity. And is not the Trinity itself a kind of symbol — a symbol of which the meaning seems quite uncertain?

Yet, while we can hardly hope to share with our Indian brothers their feeling for their symbols, nor expect them fully to appreciate ours, we can at least cultivate a sympathetic attitude toward one another's symbols if we only will. And if we

[1] The first of a list of questions which some of the Benares missionaries have written out for the newly made converts to answer and study is this: "What can wash away sin?" And of course the answer, which the converts have to learn, is: "Not Ganges water, but blood."

really make the effort to do this, — instead of satisfying ourselves with clever ejaculations as to their absurdities, — we may gain some sort of insight into their spiritual value. This is the only way. It was thus, for instance, that Sister Nivedita won the insight which so distinguishes her among writers on India. The story of her learning the significance of Kali, the Great Mother, will illustrate what I mean. One evening shortly after her arrival in Calcutta, she heard a cry in a quiet lane, and following her ears, found it came from a little Hindu girl who lay in her mother's arms, dying. The end came soon, and the poor mother for a time wept inconsolably. Then at last, wearied with her sobbing, she fell back into Sister Nivedita's arms, and turning to her, said: "Oh, what shall I do? Where is my child now?" And Sister Nivedita adds: "I have always regarded that as the moment when I found the key. Filled with a sudden pity, not so much for the bereaved woman as for those to whom the use of some particular language of the Infinite is a question of morality, I leaned forward. 'Hush, mother!' I said. 'Your child is with the Great Mother. She is with Kali!' And for a moment, with memory stilled, we were enfolded together, Eastern and Western, in the unfathomable depth of consolation of the World-Heart."

CHAPTER II

HINDU WORSHIP

WHEN you have climbed the steps and taken off your shoes, you may enter the inner court of the temple. Just inside the gate is a basin with flowing water and beside it a little image of Ganesh, the fat god with the elephant head; and at the other end of the court stands the temple proper, consisting of three large shrines, each roofed over, but quite open in front. In the central one sits Shiva or Mahadev (the "Great God"), with his wife Parvati by his side. The shrine on his right is occupied by Vishnu and his wife Lakshmi, while in the third shrine is the goddess Jumna, unattended. To find both Shiva and Vishnu in the same temple is not usual, nor is the goddess of the Jumna River commonly met with. But this is in Delhi, and that will explain her presence at least. Perhaps I should have begun this chapter with a description of some Hindu temple that was in *all* respects "typical"; but this particular one was the first I had been allowed to enter, so I shall take the reader into it along with me.

It was evident at once that this was not a *church*, but a *temple* — or should I say a *palace?* The five images were all gorgeously clad,[1] and were granting an audience to their faithful subjects. The subjects were present too and doing homage, not in very great numbers at any one time, to be sure (for this was not a service), but in a constantly flowing stream, arriving and departing. I stood and watched them for some time — for I found the worshipers more interesting than the gods. They were all men, and they were all very much in earnest and very reverent. On entering the court each would first ring a bell that hung over the gateway, then wash his hands at the basin and, turning toward the shrine where he meant to worship, bow lowly, then rise, or perhaps prostrate himself upon the floor,

[1] Cf. the Roman Catholic custom of clothing images of the Madonna with costly silks and jewels.

and pray silently. Some went forward into the shrine and made offerings before the images. These offerings were usually either flowers, rice, and bunches of certain leaves, or money; and if the latter, the priest who has charge of the temple is supposed to use it for the purchase of flowers for the god.[1] But the priest was not in evidence; no one was mediating between the god and his worshipers, who brought their adoration and their requests very simply and silently and directly to the deity. Not a word was spoken aloud, nor was there any audible murmuring as there is so often in Catholic churches. The men were simply standing there in the court or within the shrine, a few prostrate or kneeling, all looking intently at the image of their chosen deity, and all very evidently praying. His prayer finished, the worshiper bows again, or more often prostrates himself, touching the floor with his forehead, and steps out with silent feet, walking backward till out of the temple, so as not to turn his back on the god. At the gate he rings the bell again and departs, to give place to some one else. This tinkling bell of arriving and departing worshipers is the only sound one hears.

One of these worshipers, wearing the horizontal marks of Shiva on his forehead, could speak English; and, following the almost invariable custom throughout India, he did his best to welcome the stranger. I asked him to tell me about his offerings and prayers. He said that he chooses as offerings to "god" things he himself likes; not with any idea that "god" will use them, but that "god" is pleased with the gift as a sign of homage and humility. After presenting his gift he prays. His prayer consists of (1) pronouncing the deity's name; (2) repeating certain verses which he has learned and which differ according to the god worshiped; and (3) making certain petitions of his own. Thus, if he wants success in a business transaction, or if his child is ill, he comes and asks help of Shiva. "And," he added with great confidence, "*Shiva gives it — Shiva does give it!*"

A scene such as this represents the informal temple worship of the laymen. But the gods are also formally worshiped, sometimes by the priest alone, sometimes by priest and people,

[1] From what I know of Brahmin priests I think Shiva would prefer his worshipers should make their offerings *in kind.*

in a regular ceremony of more or less complexity. Such a ceremony of homage is known as *puja*, and in most of the temples it occurs at least once a day. The layman may do puja of a modest and simple sort, but the more elaborate pujas are performed by Brahmin priests. Every temple has from one to forty or more priests, whose duty it is to perform the daily cult. In the larger temples this is a complex business and requires many priests: but it is less confusing to watch it in a small shrine where only one priest is officiating. One may see it in any part of India, but the particular ceremony that I happen to remember best was up in Hardwar. It was in a small Shiva temple, which consisted merely of a room perhaps fifteen feet square, in the center of which was a stone *lingam*, and near by a sculptured bull, kneeling toward it. The lingam is the commonest of all religious objects in India,[1] and almost invariably takes the place of the image in Shiva temples. It looks like a short column with rounded top and is in fact a phallic emblem. Its exact origin is quite lost in antiquity, but phallic symbols are common the world over, and this one, like the rest, probably originated as the emblem of some primitive god of procreation, and seems to have been assimilated to the worship of Shiva when the relatively uncultured people with whom it originated were admitted into Hinduism. That this took place at Benares would probably be a good guess, though a guess that can hardly be verified. At any rate, Shiva and the lingam have for many centuries grown together, and the lingam has for nearly all his worshipers quite lost all sexual significance, and is simply the object in which Mahadev, the Great God, chooses to incarnate himself for the purposes of worship. As the other gods dwell for ritualistic purposes in their images, so Shiva dwells within the lingam.

The kneeling bull close by is faithful Nandi, the "vehicle" or "mount" of Shiva; and wherever you find a lingam you are likely to find Nandi, sculptured in perpetual adoration of the Great God's symbol. In addition to Nandi two or three images of other deities are usually found in subordinate positions in a Shiva temple. Shiva's wife Parvati and his eldest son, the elephant-headed Ganesh, are almost invariably of this number;

[1] Monier Williams says there are 30,000,000 of them.

and in the south of India his second son Kartikkeya, or Subrahmanya, the Indian Mars, is usually represented with the rest of the family. In the north one seldom finds him, but Hanuman, the monkey god, often takes his place. So it was in the temple at Hardwar — the great lingam in the center with faithful Nandi near by, while images of Parvati, Ganesh, and Hanuman — covered with glaring red paint — were on the walls. No worshipers were present, but the old priest was busy at his morning's devotions when we arrived. He had already covered the lingam with flowers — a long process, since these must be laid on one by one and each with the proper formula — and had performed many a ceremonial libation of Ganges water upon the flower-bedecked symbol. And now he began offering flowers, one at a time, to the subordinate deities on the wall, intoning, as he did so, "Ganesh Om!" "Hanuman Om!" "Parvati Om!" Next he put a number of leaves, one by one, on the lingam, saying, "Shiva Om!" after which he presented a few to the other deities. Then he touched the feet of the three images with his hands and put his hands to his head — the Indian token of homage — "taking the dust from the feet," they call it. The lingam had now to be marked for the day, and the priest did this by daubing it with streaks of brownish paint with his thumb. Then, standing before the lingam and fingering his beads, he repeated many times, "Shiva Om! Shiva Om!" together with other words which I could not catch; after which he put his beads back around his neck and intoned many verses or prayers.[1]

The offerings to the gods, as the reader has seen, consist usually of flowers, leaves, rice, and water. In Vedic times the gods received animal sacrifices, but this practice was given up in the worship of most of the gods when the belief in transmigration made animal life sacred to the Hindus. In the worship of Vishnu no life is ever taken nor are any bloody sacrifices received, and, with very rare exceptions, the same is true of the worship of Shiva. This is not the case, however, with all the

[1] For a more detailed description of puja in Shiva and Vishnu temples see Monier Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism* (4th ed., New York, Macmillan, 1891), pp. 93–94, 144–45, and 438–41; also Farquhar's *Crown of Hinduism* (Oxford, 1913), pp. 313–14.

gods.[1] Particularly Kali, who may be called the goddess of Nature or the goddess of Death, is not satisfied with a vegetable diet, but demands at certain intervals — usually once a week — a bloody sacrifice. Every Thursday morning in Benares four goats are offered to her. The animal is tied to a post in front of the temple, a woman holds him by his legs, and the religious executioner severs his head from his body with one stroke of a heavy knife. The head is then borne into the temple and presented before Kali's image; while the body makes a sacred and pleasant meal for the temple priests. Bloody sacrifices reach their climax during the Durga Puja at the Kalighat temple in Calcutta. "The temple almost swims with blood, and the smell is most sickening. The people bring their victims, pay the fee, and the priest puts a little red lead on the animal's head. When its turn comes the executioner takes the animal, fixes its head in a frame, and then beheads it. A little of the blood is placed in front of the idol and the pilgrim takes away the headless body."[2] A little human blood (not enough to do any great harm) Kali considers a particular relish. Mr. Murdoch quotes a learned Hindu as saying, "There is scarcely a respectable house in Bengal the mistress of which has not at one time or other shed her own blood under the notion of satisfying the goddess by the operation."[3] Other things besides

[1] "Goats, kids, chickens, buffaloes are offered here and there in sacrifice. . . . One poor fellow once told me he had done everything he knew to cure his sick wife and all to no avail; now he was leaving her alone for the time while he walked twelve miles to a place to offer a kid in sacrifice. This was his last resort." (Stover, *India: A Problem* [Elgin, Ill., Brethren Pub. House, 1903], p. 152.) There is a very persistent movement on foot all over India, on the part of many Hindus and most Jainas, to put a stop to animal sacrifice altogether, both by rousing public opinion against it and by inducing the various local authorities to forbid it. Scarcely a month passes that there is not a notice in the Jaina *Gazette* of some noble and merciful rajah having prohibited animal sacrifice within his domains, or a very emotional petition, signed by Jainas and Hindus, to some other rajah to do the same.

[2] J. Murdoch, *Siva Bhakti* (Madras, Christian Lit. Society, 1902), p. 24.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 25. It must be remembered, however, that this sentence was written about twenty years ago. Apparently the custom is a survival of the rite of human sacrifice which used to be performed in honor of the bloodthirsty goddess before the English became masters of the land. And according to Rev. Mr. Martin, "there seems reason to suspect that even at the present day sacrifices are occasionally performed secretly in the shrines of Kali or Durga Devi. There are numerous modern instances in Nepal. At Benares one recently occurred. At Chanda and Lanjii, near Nagpur, there

edibles and flowers are also occasionally offered to the gods, for the worshiper wishes to present the deity with anything he thinks the deity would like. Two favorite offerings in Shiva temples are incense and the waving of lamps, in which *ghi* (liquefied butter) is burned on cotton wicks. In some of the temples of Krishna, where the god is represented as an infant, tiny caps, children's fans, and other adornments for the divine child are brought by the faithful — in fact, there are shops full of them just outside of the temple precincts for the benefit of the worshipers. The large temples in the south of India are provided with dancing girls who perform on various occasions in honor of the god and presumably for his delectation — girls, I should add, consecrated in youth to the service of the temple, and whose official duty is not confined merely to dancing.

The worshipers, as I have said, may go to the temple and pray without the mediation of the priest; and every day the priest officially performs the proper rites for the benefit of the god. And Shiva at least may also be worshiped automatically, without any worshipers being present at all, for the form of worship most pleasing to him is the libation of water upon the lingam. Hence a clever device has been invented for this purpose: a good-sized water-tank, filled with Ganges water, is suspended over a lingam, with a tiny opening arranged in such a way that one or two drops of the sacred liquid shall fall every minute upon Shiva's emblem. Thus is the perpetual adoration of the Great God maintained without any further work being involved than the occasional filling of the tank.

But besides these simple modes of worship there are more elaborate services in which priest and people unite. Any morning one may witness these — from outside the door — in half a

are shrines to Kali at which human sacrifices to the goddess have been offered almost within the memory of the present generation." (*The Gods of India* [London, Dent, 1914], p. 188.) In the past, of course, human sacrifice in India was not confined to Hinduism and the cult of Kali. A number of semi-barbarous and animistic tribes have practiced the rite, notably the Kondhs. Mr. Thurston, in his *Omens and Superstitions of Southern India* (New York, McBride, 1912), refers to several cases of human sacrifice among them since the year 1880; and "even so recently as 1902, a European magistrate in Ganjam received a petition asking for permission to perform a human sacrifice, which was intended to give a rich color to the turmeric crop" (*op. cit.*, p. 206).

dozen temples in almost every large city. There is usually a great deal of "music" from gongs and drums; hymns are sometimes sung (especially in the south); the priest makes the common offering of rice and flowers and Ganges water, and does much chanting; the drums and gongs quicken their beat, and the puja winds up in an exciting *finale* and noisy crash, with much waving of flaming lamps before the god; after which the priest distributes to the audience the consecrated offerings and the holy water, each worshiper getting a little to take home with him. Sometimes these sacred things cannot be had so cheaply — as in the Krishna temple at Benares, where the offerings after being presented to the god are sold to certain shops and may there be bought (by Hindus only) at an enhanced price.

Some of the temples at Benares are thronged every morning with pilgrims from various parts of India, and especially at the great fane known as the Golden Temple will one find an almost endless stream of worshipers filing inwards, with little brass jars filled from the Ganges to be emptied piously on Shiva's lingam. The scene as one views it through the open door is hardly edifying: the great lingam is barely visible, covered over with yellow marigolds, and constantly drenched with water, gongs and bells sounding in various parts of the temple, priests and pilgrims nearly naked walking about from shrine to shrine, talking and laughing, a big sacred bull often sauntering in and being fed, and the floor awash with Ganges water, marigold petals, and cow dung. Soon the detachment of pilgrims files out to make room for a new lot, and as they pass through the door the fat priests who stand there make each one bow low and deliver up some of his fast-disappearing savings — for the glory of god and the dinner of the godly.

But it is in the south of India that one sees the temple worship in its most elaborate form. The temples themselves are almost incredibly enormous. They are not buildings, but enclosures of many acres, with great gates and towers, and (within) tanks, temples, shrines, halls, corridors, storehouses, and sometimes bazaars and dwellings — veritable cities, in short, reminding one strikingly of the great temples of ancient Egypt. The dimensions of the largest one of them — the temple of

Srirangam (a local name for Vishnu), near Trichinopoly — are worth giving. It is 2880 feet long, 2475 feet wide, and is the largest temple in the world. Close by stands a temple to Shiva almost as large, while at Madura, Tanjore, Rameswaram, Thiruklikundrum, Puri, Conjeeveram, and various other places are temples only slightly smaller. In each of these great enclosures is a central shrine in which is kept the most sacred image or lingam, and before it puja is elaborately performed every day by a large body of priests. In addition to this there is a special form of worship which one does not find in the north — namely, the practice of taking the god out for a ride or sometimes for a short visit in the country. For this purpose enormous cars are kept in the temples, whose wheels are sometimes seven feet or more in diameter and so heavy that it takes scores of men to draw them. I once met one of the gods returning in his car from a week in the country, where he had gone to enjoy the bath in a sacred tank. It was evening and a long procession preceded and followed the chariot. First came torch-bearers, with drummers and cymbal-bearers and other "musicians," followed by fifty or more men in line, and then more drums and more torches. After these came the enormous and most ornate car and high up upon it where all could see sat the image, gorgeously dressed and embedded in flowers. Several Brahmin priests were riding on the car, at the foot of the image, and every now and then the procession would stop to give the pious an opportunity to rush up and present offerings, chiefly of fruit, which the priests graciously accepted and placed before the idol. There was a great deal of shouting and laughing and merrymaking, and obviously every one was having a good time — the priests particularly. Nearly every one seemed to regard it as a kind of lark; a kind of lark, it should be added, in which religion becomes a grown-up way of playing dolls.

But the most elaborate and memorable performance of the sort that I saw in India was at the great temple in Madura. The temple alone is most mysterious and impressive. You enter it through a *gopuram*, or gateway, 152 feet high, and find yourself in what seems another world — a forest of carved columns, a forest of statues, one inner wall after another and a carved tower at the passageway through each, a tank or pool

as large as a lake, with palm trees growing by it, and now and then a vista through a dim corridor into a dark shrine in the very interior — the holy of holies where Shiva dwells — lighted only by twinkling candles and where you and I are not allowed to enter. In the night the temple doubles its mystery, and the corridors lengthen out under the influence of flaring torches and thousands of tiny candles. We were fortunate in happening upon an evening when the gods were taken in procession through the temple and around it. The image of Shiva and of his wife Parvati were dressed and adorned with golden plates and a great display of jewels, and each was placed on the back of a beautifully carved horse — carved in wood with great artistic skill and covered over with gold leaf. At a given signal each of these was raised on the backs of forty or fifty porters, and first made to dance and then carried forward amid the shouts of the people and the sound of pipes, drums, cymbals, and conches. Reinforcements now were added. Two elephants, richly caparisoned, led the procession, which started through the avenues and under the great gopurams of the temple. After the elephants came six men carrying umbrellas and dancing wildly, then Shiva's eldest son, the elephant-headed Ganesh, carried in his car, and Shiva's second son Subrahmanya in his. In the center of the procession, following his two sons, came the Great God himself, on his prancing golden steed, with much music, followed by his wife, and she in turn followed by her servant-god (for the chief gods have servants divine as well as human). The rear of the procession was brought up by a dozen Brahmin priests walking side by side and hand in hand, chanting the Vedas. "There they go," said an old Hindu to me; "there they go, chanting the Vedas; and not one of them understands a word of what he is saying!" There was no light, of course, except the lurid gleam of torches and the twinkling of the little lamps on the many towering portals through which the gods and their worshipers passed — a thousand on each gate. So the procession swept out through the great gopuram into the city and made a circuit around the outer walls of the whole temple with much enthusiasm, noise, and yellow light.

But great temples like that at Madura are hardly so typical of Hinduism as small ones, where one or two individuals at a

time go and do their daily puja. At the roadside shrine one sees the religion of the people better than in the pomp of the great processions. In fact not even a temple is needed for the public worship of the gods. Under many a pipal tree one finds collections of ancient stone lingams or images, — the red Hanuman or the pot-bellied Ganesh with his trunk; and around these the beliefs and superstitions of the common people center quite as much as about the more elaborate images in the great temples. The trees themselves, moreover, are sacred and so are many plants; and one will often see a Brahmin brandishing a lamp before some pitiful little sprig of a tree, or an old woman reverently laying a few grains of rice at its foot, or burning a wick before it, with very evident and sincere belief in the efficacy of her actions to accomplish some desired end. Thus the superstitious Hindu "worships" not only the great gods but an immense army of spirits, including his own ancestors; and he also "worships" such things as the cow and even his own tools. But care must be taken in interpreting this word "worship." We use it only to indicate man's attitude toward God. To understand the Indian phenomenon which is denoted by the word as used by most writers on India, it is necessary to give it quite a new meaning. Worship here should be understood to mean either a conventional act which it is good to perform because sanctioned by custom, or a request from one finite being to another, some degree of awe being involved in the fact that the being to whom the request is made remains forever behind the scenes. It does not, however, necessarily involve any moral reverence, or any recognition of greatly superior power. It is more like a business proposition than like Christian worship. Our state of mind, if we should ask Carnegie for a library, is probably not far different from that of the native when he worships a tree spirit. In like manner he worships the King-Emperor and the Viceroy, and he will worship you and me if he needs baksheesh. The elaborate "Salaam Sahib! Salaam Sahib!" of the coolie or beggar to the man with the big topee is a kind of puja. It is in some such sense as this that we must understand the Indian's "worship" of the cow and the various spirits of the air.

But we must not judge all Hindu worship by scenes like these. Nor must we forget that our eyes are blinded by our own

traditions and our own symbols to the best things in the Hindu temples as seen by Hindu eyes. Says Farquhar: "Hinduism has proved itself a most powerful system both in organizing the people and in stimulating them religiously; and no part of the religion has been more living and effective than the worship of the temple. . . . The temple is a constant joy to each Hindu because he can go and actually look on the face of the god whom he loves, express his affection by giving him a gift of food, pour into his ear all his sorrows and all his desires, hear the god's reply, and go home fortified against evil spirits and ill-luck through eating a portion of the food that has been offered to the divinity. The *bhakti* [personal religious devotion] of the Hindu, whether villager or saintly poet, is usually a passionate devotion to a single idol. He dances with rapture or falls in a swoon from sudden emotion when he sees the glory of the divine eyes." [1]

And if we would gain any glimmer of comprehension of the inner meaning of the temple worship, we must turn our gaze away from the images of the gods and the external side of the performance, and fasten it instead upon the faces of the worshipers. For though the human face also is a symbol, it is a symbol which we all can understand. Much of Hindu temple worship is degraded, but there are elements in it which, though incomprehensible to us, somehow have their value. Come to the bathing-ghats at Benares and watch the lines of people streaming up into the temples of Mahadev that crown their summit. It is a serious throng this, though one finds smiles as well as sadness there. A few young men there are in it, but most of the men are of middle age or old. And the greater part of the procession — as of most religious processions of the twentieth century — is made up of women. Some bring with them bright hopes and happy faces, but most of them have little left in this world but religion, they being widows — widows young and old, with heads eternally shaven, trudging one after another up the steps to the temple of Mahadev. The gong and drum inside the temple are calling the worshipers with ever-increasing din, and the women and men pause at the doorway and bow, or touch the panel or the floor with their hands and

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 327.

rub these on their foreheads, and then go in — where you and I are not allowed to go; for happily the shrine is sacred and these have privileges in it which are very precious and which you and I may not share. Each worshiper carries a brass jar or bowl filled with Ganges water, and, wrapped up somewhere in her loose-flowing garments, a few grains of rice and the petals of flowers — mostly marigolds or roses. Some of these are laid reverently before the images of the lesser gods whose shrines line the walls of the temple, and then with pious feet our worshiper advances to the stone lingam of Shiva who is Mahadev, the Great God. On this she pours the Ganges water which she has brought, and here deposits her poor gift of flowers or food, and then stands for some time in silent prayer — silent except for the whispered word, now and then, "Mahadev! Mahadev!" Her prayer finished, she joins the human stream going outward from the temple; and if one may trust the expression on her face, she is taking with her something that she did not bring. She has found something in that shrine, something like comfort or hope, or at least a sense of duty done and God pleased. In some sense or other she has met God in the Hindu temple.

But it is in the home even more than in the temple that the pious Hindu expects to meet God. In every Hindu house before the advent of Western influence there was — and in all the more conservative houses there is still — a temple room, provided with a few pictures of favorite deities and a number of stone, clay, or brass images. Shiva's lingam [1] is almost invari-

[1] There are three kinds of lingams commonly used in worship: (1) those made of earth or clay for temporary use and destroyed after puja (it should be thrown into the Ganges if possible); (2) carved stone or clay or metal lingams which may be bought in the bazaar; (3) small rounded stones or large pebbles of the general shape of a lingam and obtained from the Nerbudda River. Worshipers of Vishnu frequently keep in their homes a kind of fossilized shell or large pebble covered with many odd markings and holes (an ammonite or nautilus) known as salagrama stones, and found in the streams of Nepal. They are peculiarly sacred to Vishnu, and are sometimes bathed, dried with a cloth, ornamented with flowers, set upon a throne, and worshiped. Images of the various gods — usually of brass — may be bought in the bazaar in any city. In addition to images, some Hindus, especially worshipers of shakti, make use of *yantras* or mystic diagrams in their worship. Both images and yantras must first be *magnetized*, so to speak, with the divine presence by means of the recitation of *mantras*, before the god comes to dwell in them for purposes of worship.

ably one of these — usually of stone and from six inches to a foot high — while Vishnu, Ganesh, and Hanuman are also likely to be represented. If the family can afford it, it employs a Brahmin priest to look out for the religious interests of the family and take charge of the domestic shrine.[1] The priest does daily puja and before each meal rings a bell in the shrine, whereupon the lady of the house presents part of the food to the god. This in fact she does always, whether the family has a priest or not. All the members of the family also come into the shrine before each meal and do puja. This custom of sharing each meal with the god, who must be served before any one else, together with the united family worship in recognition of the divine care, is of course "primitive," but is not lacking in certain rather pleasing aspects. It is in some respects similar to our custom of "asking the blessing" before meals. But both customs are too "primitive" for these times, and they are both fast disappearing, especially among the "more intelligent."

I do not wish to idealize the Hindu domestic shrine, however. The worship which one finds there, though sincere so far as it goes, is often very ignorant. I had a talk with a Hindu merchant in Ceylon, who, though far from his native land (he and his partner had come from Karachi), had brought with him into the Buddhist island two of his old gods and a few of his religious books. He told me that he and his partner never went to the Hindu temple, but that they had a little temple of their own in the back of their shop, where they did puja regularly morning and night, and he very kindly took me to see it. It was a closet, small and dark, its walls lined with the usual pictures from Hindu mythology, such as you see in almost every Hindu shop or booth in India. It was provided with two shelves, on one of which were a few books, while on the other were standing two images, which he showed me with some pride and a little reverence. One was unmistakably Ganesh — as in fact he said. The other I did not recognize,

[1] Cf. the custom of the ancient Hebrew family to employ a Levite to attend to its domestic worship. The reader will remember the story of Micah who had "an house of gods" (i.e., of domestic images) and who secured the services of a young Levite who was seeking his fortunes in that land. See Judges, XVII and XVIII.

and he said he did not know who it was, but he worshiped it twice a day just the same. He said his partner knew who it was; and since this knowledge belonged to the firm it evidently satisfied him. He did not himself know anything about the god except that it had to be worshiped twice a day and this he did conscientiously. He said that he prayed to these two gods for whatever he wanted, in prayers of his own making: and when I asked him if his prayers were answered and if the gods gave him what he petitioned for, he said, "Of course!"

This man always spoke of the images as "gods." I asked if he meant that they really were gods, or merely representations of the gods. He answered that the images were the gods themselves. On being questioned further, he said there was only one god Ganesh, but many images of him: yet insisted that this image *was* the god Ganesh. This complete cloudiness of thought represents, I believe, the attitude of a large proportion of the uneducated Hindus on the question of idols and their nature, though certainly not all express their real position so frankly. The nature of Indian idolatry is a very difficult question. Excellent evidence can be brought forward to prove that the Hindus regard their idols as images only — as merely suggestions or symbols of the divine; while evidence equally good shows that the Hindus identify the images with the gods themselves. The truth is, of course, that not only is each of these views held by different members of the community, according to their stage of enlightenment, but that probably the majority of the Hindus hold both views at once — as did my friend in Ceylon. It is only in logic that contradictory opposites are incompatible; in the human mind they often keep house together very comfortably.

Most Hindus whom you question as to the nature of their idols will tell you that these are not to be identified with their gods, but are merely likenesses or perhaps nothing but "suggestions" of the divine, which they find to be a help in the concentration of their minds in worship. The Shiva worshiper already referred to, who showed me about the temple in Delhi, said to me, "The image is not Shiva. Shiva is in heaven. But I want to worship Shiva, so I make a picture or image as like Him in appearance as I can, and then I pray to Shiva in

front of it because it helps me to pray." And according to Howells, "the ordinary villager all over India" will respond to the missionary's protest against idolatry in words like these:— "Yes, sir, we agree with all you say as to the spiritual character of God. With you we believe God to be Spirit, and with you we say that He must be worshiped in spirit and in truth. But is not God omnipresent? Is not the Eternal Spirit everywhere, filling all space? Are not all earth and sky and heaven full of his glory? Then, if God be everywhere, as all admit, is He not in tree and flower and rock and sky and cloud? And so, when we fall down before the idols of wood and stone, do not think that we worship the mere wood and stone; we rather worship the One Supreme God, who by virtue of His omnipresence is in the tree and in the rock and pervades all space." [1]

Though presentations of the matter in this light are common and decidedly beautiful, they are not exact. For the image of the cult unquestionably has a sacredness in the eyes of the devout Hindu which is lacking not only in ordinary "wood and stone," but lacking also in other images of exactly the same appearance which have not been duly consecrated. In every great Hindu temple you will find a large number of images of the god to whom the temple is sacred, sculptured in the corridors or on the towers or standing in the courts. But no one worships these. It is only the image in the central shrine to which one does puja. There is a regular and elaborate process which must be gone through by a duly qualified Brahmin priest — the recitation of many mantras, sprinkling of holy water, etc. — before the idol is recognized not as an ordinary image, but as a "cult-image." Rather significantly this ceremony is technically known as the "bringing-in" (of the deity), or as the "establishment of life" (in the image).[2] The whole process of puja, moreover, the bathing and dressing of the idol, the presentation of food, water, and sweets to it, the sending it into the country for an airing, and the final putting it to sleep at night, show plainly that there is something more here than an attempt to concentrate one's thoughts on God, and that the cult-image is conceived of as being in some sense or other a genuine and

[1] Howells, *The Soul of India* (London, James Clarke, 1913), p. 417.
[2] Farquhar, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

peculiar embodiment of the Divine.[1] An Indian philosopher of my acquaintance said to me: "Ask any one of the lower classes as to his view of idols, and he will assure you that the image before which he prays is not God but only a symbol. This he will say; but it is a question whether he really feels it. It seems more probable that this is a kind of phrase which all Hindus have learned, but that in their hearts many of the lower classes practically identify the stone image with the god."

And not only is the god present in the cult-image for purposes of worship in a peculiar way; different cult-images of the same god often acquire in the course of years a distinction of their own which almost makes them into separate personalities. Farquhar has illustrated, out of the life of Ramanuja, the way in which the Vishnu of Conjeeveram and the Vishnu of Trichinopoly were already in the time of the philosopher regarded as being sufficiently separate personalities to allow of their contending with each other for the possession of a favorite disciple;[2] and the god of many a lesser shrine has attained to an independent personality almost equal to that of the two Vishnu idols cited.[3]

Of course educated Hindus of to-day do not identify the image with God; but some of them believe that God does manifest himself in some peculiar sense in the image for the benefit of the worshiper,[4] and many testify that they find the presence of an image a real help in bringing about the religious attitude of mind and insist that for the uneducated it is almost a necessity. A cultured Bengalee Brahmin said to me: "The idol is

[1] For a thorough and persuasive discussion of this subject see Farquhar, *op. cit.*, chap. VIII.

[2] *Op. cit.*, pp. 325–26.

[3] Something like this almost inevitably follows whenever and wherever worship at special shrines is regarded as having special virtue. It is to be found in most polytheistic religions where pilgrimages are encouraged; and to some extent in Catholic Christianity as well. Our Lady of Lourdes occupies a very different position from that of Our Lady of Paris.

[4] Farquhar quotes a modern Vaishnavite as follows: "The manifestation is that form of the Lord in which the Lord is pleased, without any kind of limitation as to time, places, or persons, to be present and manifest Himself to all, in temples and homes, to wink at faults, and to be, for every movement or business, dependent on the worshiper" (p. 320). But there have always been protests from spiritual Hindus against every sort of idolatry.

useful in aiding visualization and concentration. It is a sensuous symbol, just as the word G–O–D is. Both are symbols, one tangible and visible, the other audible; and both are helpful to our finite minds in standing for the Infinite. The man who worships before an idol in effect prays: 'O God, come and dwell in this image before me for the moment that I may worship thee here concretely!'"

The truth is, a good deal more can be said in defense of an intelligent use of "idols" than one who has never seriously considered the matter is likely to conceive. And thoughtful missionaries like Howells and Farquhar are quite ready to admit this fact. Nor can it be said that criticism such as is made by the former of these gentlemen (and in part concurred in by the latter) is altogether satisfactory. He gives a typical argument between an intelligent "idolater" and a missionary, in which he is quite just to the former except in cutting the discussion short and giving the missionary the last word. The missionary's last word — which the author evidently regards as decisive — amounts to this: that Hindu idols are ugly and quite unworthy representations of the Divine; and the natural desire to represent God concretely is fully satisfied in God's incarnation, Jesus Christ.[1] It seems plain enough that if the "idolater" were permitted a final reply, it would be something like this: "When you speak of Christ as the concrete representation of God, you miss the point of my argument altogether. For what I feel the need of is something that can appeal directly to my senses. Were Christ here visibly and tangibly, then indeed your argument would hold. But he is gone these nineteen hundred years. And as to my ugly images — *de gustibus*

Thus a Shaivite poet who lived a thousand years ago (one Pattanattu Pillai — may his name not be lost!) could write as follows: —

"My God is not a chiseled stone
Or lime-block clear and bright,
No bronzen image He, forsooth,
That's cleansed for mortal's sight.

"I cannot worship such as these,
But make my lofty boasts
That in my heart I set the feet
Of the great God of Hosts."

For more of the same tenor see Barnett's *The Heart of India* (London, Murray, 1908), pp. 88–92.

[1] Howells, *op. cit.*, pp. 418–19.

non disputandum. I do not take them to be likenesses of God, but only symbolical representations of certain divine attributes. And you, not being a Hindu, of course should not expect to understand the powerful emotional appeal they have for me."

There can be no question of the contribution which the senses make in bringing about the religious state of mind. Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant, has recognized this fact in the arrangement of its churches and its services. Our thought and still more our feeling has need of concrete sensuous supports. It is to this fundamental need of the human mind that the use of images has appealed since first the Divine retreated behind the visible and took up its abode in the Unseen. The history of religion in all parts of the world is ample evidence of this psychological fact. Even the Buddhists and Jainas have been forced to adopt the use of images, and the Catholic Church in its prayers to the saints, and still more in its central doctrine of the Real Presence, has recognized and utilized this deep-lying need. There is, therefore, considerable justification for the defender of images when he maintains that most men, and particularly those on a low stage of intellectual development, may find a great deal of help in the presence of an "idol." The widows, for instance, whom I described some pages back coming out of the temple of Mahadev and taking home with them genuine comfort — would they have found that comfort if the temple had had no image or symbol of the Great God? It seems extremely doubtful. The faith of these faithful souls finds reinforcement in the sensuous presence of a physical object which is very real. The Great God doubtless is present everywhere; but what is that abstract doctrine compared with the sense of proximity to the Deity and the realization of His presence which comes to the poor soul when she sees this symbol of the mystery of life directly before her, and pours her offering of sacred water directly upon this concrete object in which the Great God has consented to take up (for her sake) His miraculous abode?

The danger in the use of images is the ease of their misuse. And in India the great majority of those who use them misuse them. By this I mean that they identify the object with the Divine in some magical sense, and hence the door is open to all

sorts of degrading superstitions. And while the use of images makes it easier for the mind to realize the presence of the Divine, it is questionable whether the Divine does not lose more of excellence in the process than it gains in power. The Divine is dwarfed in order to be made assimilable to the human mind without stretching the latter; — as if the stretching of the mind were not one of the chief services which religion does for man. And if God is really to be pleased by the presentation of flowers and rice to his image, then religion degenerates into a very external matter — which is hardly to be recommended because it is "easy." No, undeniable as is the psychological aid to be derived from the use of images, idolatry as actually practiced in India results in evils considerably greater than all the benefits ascribed to it by its defenders.

So much, then, for the use of idols and for the puja of the temple and the home. But public and domestic ceremonies of the kind described in this chapter are not the only ways in which one acquires merit with the gods. One of the most important forms of the Hindu cult, and one of the distinguishing features of religion in India, is to be found in religious pilgrimages to sacred places — a subject that will occupy our attention in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE HINDU PILGRIM

INDIA is as thickly strewn with sacred spots as Europe and America with power factories. Most of these holy places are thronged at certain periods of the year — and some of them every day of the year — with crowds of pilgrims who have come from near-by towns, or even from distant parts of India, to worship at the shrine, bathe in the waters of the sacred river or tank or sea which is almost invariably to be found near the temple, and incidentally to have a pleasant social time and meet All-the-world and his wife, who are sure to be there. An Indian pilgrimage suggests a French *pardon* in its mixture of piety, earnestness, and restrained joyousness. One cannot call it *gay*, and there can be no question of the solemnity which the pilgrims feel in performing the various rites; and yet it is very evident that every one is happy; and if, on the one hand, there is never a sign of indecorum, there is, on the other, nothing to suggest the Puritan Sabbath. Perhaps the most striking thing in these pilgrimages is to be found in the tremendous numbers that attend them and the way they continue with no ebb of the tide throughout the year. The tourist in India is constantly surprised at the numbers of the natives in the trains. They are packed away in the fourth-class compartments like cattle from Chicago to New York — hundreds and hundreds of happy Hindus, dressed in all varieties of colored rags, with some getting out and more getting in at every station. Where are all these men and women going? The answer is that most of them are on a pilgrimage. They have saved up their annas and their pice for months and now they are off for a religious holiday. Or perhaps they are returning home from one. In either case they are a happy lot: those starting out are happy in anticipation, those returning are filled with the sense of duty done and merit acquired. They are that much farther along on their great journey through the universe and through the ages, from

the lowest forms of life up to the highest heaven, a journey of which the Hindu seems ever conscious and on which he ever regards himself as an unresting pilgrim.

Of the hundreds of holy places in India there are a few which stand out as peculiarly holy, and of these the six following are perhaps the most sacred: Hardwar, Allahabad, and Benares, all on the Ganges: Brindaban, on the Jumna; Puri, near the eastern coast and about three hundred miles south of Calcutta; and Rameswaram, on the island of that name — one of the chain of islands known as "Adam's Bridge" lying between South India and Ceylon. Of these six holy places it was my good fortune to visit four, and I can probably give the reader a better idea of India's pilgrims by describing what I saw myself than by giving a more general description of the Indian pilgrimage as such.

The holy places I visited were Hardwar, Allahabad, Benares, and Rameswaram, as well as Mahaban (a few miles from Brindaban) of which I shall have something to say in our next chapter. Of Rameswaram I shall say but little. There were but few pilgrims visiting it the day of our pilgrimage, and I took away much more vivid impressions from the architecture of the temple with its magnificent corridors a thousand feet long than from the religious bearing of the pilgrims. Pilgrims there were, of course, bathing in the near-by lake, and then passing, in their wet garments, through the long corridors into the central shrine, sacred to Shiva. In this shrine is a famous lingam said to have been placed here by Rama, and said also to move when cooled (as it is every day) by Ganges water, which is brought nearly fifteen hundred miles for this purpose and is afterwards sold to the pilgrims. But I shall not detain the reader longer in this wonderful inner shrine; especially as neither he nor I is allowed to enter it or even to peek at its remarkable lingam from a distance. The non-Hindu may watch the dripping pilgrims disappear through a great and mysterious doorway, and that is all.

The sacred spots along the great rivers of India are much better points of pilgrimage for the non-Hindu than is Rameswaram; for in these places nearly everything of importance is open to his observation — which is in fact almost inevitable,

since the chief ceremony is the ritualistic bath in the sacred stream itself. For many of the great rivers of India, such as the Indus, the Jumna, and the Nerbudda, possess the supernatural power of washing away sin if bathed in at the proper time and in the proper way; and some of them can even assure a safe passage to the next world to him whose ashes are duly committed to their sacred waves. But while the three rivers named above, and several others which might be added to the list, possess great power and sanctity, all of them together cannot be compared in value to "Mother Ganga." "By bathing in other rivers," says the Garuda Purana, "men are purified, but so also by merely touching, drinking, or calling upon the Ganges. It sanctifies meritless men by hundreds and thousands. He who calls, O Ganga! Ganga! while life is flickering in the throat, goes when dead to the City of Vishnu and is not born again on earth." "He whose bones sink in the water of the Ganges never returns from the world of Brahma." [1]

Although along its entire length the Ganges is thus sacred and miraculously beneficent, there are certain spots upon it in which its sanctity and its supernatural powers present themselves to a special and extreme degree; and the three places already referred to are of course the most sacred of these — namely, Hardwar, where the river issues from the Himalayas; Allahabad, where it is joined by its sacred tributary the Jumna; and Benares, the Holy City.

We were fortunate, I think, in visiting Hardwar on one of its less popular days; for had there been many more pilgrims than we found, there would hardly have been any place for us. As it was, the ghats or broad flights of steps leading down to the water, were thronged for hours with men and women waiting their turn to dip, usually with nearly all their clothes on, into the ice-cold water of the strong young river. Here where it rushes from the gorge at the foot of the Himalayas its waters are as pure and clean as those of any mountain stream, and except for its icy temperature a bath in it would seem most inviting. So evidently the pilgrims think, for there is no mistaking the eagerness — as well as the reverence — with which

[1] Garuda Purana, x, 30 and 79. (Translated by Wood and Subramanyam, *The Sacred Books of the Hindus*, vol. ix, Allahabad, 1911.)

they wash their hands, heads, and teeth, and then dip ceremoniously three times under the waves. Though men and women bathe side by side there is not the least suggestion of immodesty or even of self-consciousness in the whole performance. Every one present has come on serious business, business connected with his eternal destiny, and he has no time for other considerations. The naïveté of the ceremony is most admirable; for the time being all these men and women have become as little children. When the bath is finished, they throw a few flowers into the water, or some rice for the carp which line the bottom of the stream, and then withdraw to some higher part of the ghat, where, with wonderful dexterity and equal modesty, they manage to dress by putting on dry clothes underneath the wet ones.

Suspended over the bathers' heads is a sign in large letters, expressive of both religion and political loyalty: "Ganga save the King" — a sentiment very representative of the simple people of India. At one side of the ghats, close by the bank of the river, sits a holy ascetic, warming his hands over a fire of dried cow dung, ready to accept the homage of the pilgrims, but not forcing himself on any of them. I gave him a small coin and he returned the compliment by presenting me, as a dainty to be eaten, with a pinch of ashes from his cow-dung fire. Farther downstream a man was hammering away at the lid of a tin cracker box. At last he got it open and I found it was full of ashes and the remains of human bones — evidently all that was left of some near relative. He emptied it into the stream, put the lid back on the box, and turned away with it under his arm. His nonchalant manner and his seeming indifference toward the bones were the most gruesome part of the performance. They might have been peanuts.

Yet one must not judge the Indians by the lack of expression in their faces at such a time. For the control of the expression of grief is cultivated as a virtue. And the general impression which one carries away from Hardwar is that of the pleasant but earnest and quiet performance of a serious and important duty.

To Allahabad we went more than once; but our most interesting visit was at the time of the great *Magh Mela*, — a tradi-

tional pilgrimage, established in ancient times, — which is held there every year toward the middle of January in celebration of the turning backward of the sun from the extreme southern point of its journey. For Indian astronomy, usually many centuries belated, is sometimes only three weeks behindhand. The mela is held about two miles from the city, at the point where the Ganges and Jumna unite. The bed of the Ganges is here about a mile and a half and that of the Jumna about half a mile wide but at this season of the year the two streams have receded so as to fill but a small portion of their beds, leaving the rest in the form of two long strips of plain extending toward each other and finally uniting. Between them for a mile or so runs a high bank or ridge, which serves as a road. Thus in the triangular space formed by the approximation and junction of the two rivers there is a great deal of room, and it is here that the Hindus assemble preparatory to dipping in the waters of the great streams at the supremely sacred spot where they unite.

Perhaps two thousand pilgrims had got off the train in which my wife and I, together with our friend, — the local Catholic priest, — had come up from Benares, and the railroad track was lined with masses of brilliant color from turban and sari, such as the sober West never dreams of. Not a carriage was to be had, but we managed to secure two *ekkas* and in these we sailed away through the surging crowd toward the goal of our pilgrimage — though with no great speed and with less comfort. An ekka, let me say for those who are not acquainted with the East, is a two-wheeled cart with no seat — you simply squat, native fashion, anywhere on the floor with the driver, or on the edge and let your feet hang off over the side, and hold on for dear life: for when the horse gallops the motion is not unlike that of a ship in distress. Perched grandly on our ekkas, then, we found ourselves a part of a great procession, moving over the dusty road, and at every moment on the point of running over some pious pilgrim just ahead. As we got farther out of the city other roads emptied their human currents into ours, and when we reached a point of some elevation from which we could look out over the country ahead we found the fields also filled, for miles, with marching columns and the air

clouded with dust as from the tramp of armies. As we approached the river beds the road merged into a stretch of sand, where we finally had to alight and join the pilgrims on foot, as they trudged along the ridge between the two streams. The sides of this broad roadway were lined with booths where all sorts of things were on sale, from gods to sweetmeats. Many temporary restaurants had been set up, where every kind of indigestible was to be had; also many half-religious side-shows, acclaimed by drum, conch, and cymbal. All these booths were built of large square bamboo mats, that could be put together at a moment's notice so as to form houses of any desired shape. Over most of them, at the top of long bamboo poles, waved banners with strange devices — Hindu gods, mythical animals, Urdoo inscriptions, or merely strips of varied brilliant colors. Beggars there were, of course, by the hundred — blind, crippled, leprous, — and holy men by the score. Most of these had little camps of their own — a fire of dried cow-dung in the open, beside which they sat on their skins of various wild beasts, smoking their water-pipes and watching the passing crowd with an expression of conscious superiority and disdain. The hair of holy men is usually very long — several yards long, indeed, for they buy it by the yard — and it looks very much like rope, and not unnaturally, for most of it is. They wear it in a highly matted condition, and wind it about the back of their heads somewhat as European women do. Their bodies and especially their faces are smeared and caked with clay and with ashes of cow-dung, and they have very little on. Usually they wear nothing but an exceedingly small loin-cloth, and we saw one at the mela who had dispensed with even that. The priest told me that at the mela of the preceding year there was a procession of two hundred of these wonderfully holy and absolutely stark naked saints. Of course, one is supposed to contribute to the support of these good men, and they regularly have a cloth spread out in front of them for the reception of the coins thrown them by the passing crowd. If you contribute, however, you must not expect them to thank you — not they! — the pleasure and profit are yours and the favor all on their side — as you can see from the expression on their faces. For have they not enabled you thereby to acquire merit? And they know

very well that it is far more blessed to give than to receive. So most of the passing pilgrims contribute to at least a few of the many saints and go onward in increasing blessedness.

Some of the pilgrims were themselves vying with the holy men by the mode of their progress. Far from traveling in a luxurious ekka, they were not even on foot, but were measuring the distance by their own length on the ground — lying down on their bellies, stretching their arms forward and making a mark in the sand, then rising and lying down again with their toes in the mark their hands had made, so covering the distance like a measuring-worm.

As we approached the junction of the rivers we came upon a veritable city of temporary huts of bamboo mats, in which thousands of the pilgrims were preparing to spend the night. It would be hard to compare the scene to anything in America; but if you should put together a county fair, a circus, a camp-meeting, and a fancy-dress lawn party, you would get a mixture distantly approaching it. The sun was now setting over the Jumna, and those of the pilgrims who were lucky enough to have anything to eat were finishing their evening meal; so we left the encampment and raced with the fast-descending Indian darkness, back over the sandy roads and through the dust-filled air and fading golden light to our ekkas, which (after more than an hour's jolting) brought us to Laurie's Great Northern Hotel, where we found a score of Europeans who had come to town to hear three long-haired Hungarian third-rate violinists play cheap music. For most of these Europeans had probably never heard of the mela, and those who had evidently considered it quite unworthy of a sahib's interest.

The next morning at dawn we were off again for the sacred waters, through streets flowing with two streams of humanity — the greater one going with us, the lesser but still good-sized one returning after having already washed away their sins. It was, on the whole, a happy-looking crowd and certainly an interesting one. Most of the pilgrims carried an extra dress — or cloth, or rag! — to put on after bathing, and many had their day's provisions and various other impedimenta in their hands and on their heads. Of course, a brass or wooden or earthen

bowl was part of the equipment of nearly all: and many of those returning were treasuring a water-bottle (of brass or glass) filled with the sacred liquid.

When we reached the ridge and left our carriage to join the pilgrims on foot, we found most of the same sights as on the preceding evening, with a few additional ones. In the distance ahead of us, for instance, were two long bamboo poles that were waving violently to and fro like the masts of a ship in a storm. As we approached them we saw dimly that something was suspended between them. And then it became a little hard — and rather unpleasant — to believe our eyes: for the form took human shape, and we found it was a man (a "holy" man, of course) suspended by his feet, head downward, and being swung back and forth by another holy man over a large fire. At each swing his head (which was wrapped in a thick and steaming cloth) went through the top of the flame. His fingers were pressed together in the attitude of prayer and I do not doubt that he was praying. Not much farther on a rival holy man was swinging in the same way over another fire; and the gaping crowd was paying to each the wonder that they probably desired. Yet it would be unjust to these men, I believe, to assume that notoriety was their chief aim. There are easier ways of gaining this, in India as elsewhere, than by hanging head-down over a roaring fire. And we shall hardly approximate an understanding of this strange phenomenon of Indian asceticism unless we recognize in it a sincere desire to crucify the flesh for the advancement of the spirit.

On our way back the stream of pilgrims coming to bathe was even greater than ever, and the various striking features more numerous than they had been. One of the holy men, to be sure, had disappeared from his gallows, but the other one was still swinging, though this time by an arm — three hours after we had first seen him. Hundreds of pilgrims of unmistakably Mongolian features met us, probably from the borders of Nepal. The road was lined for a mile with two unbroken rows of beggars, mostly women, with cloths spread out before them for the reception, not of copper coins, — that would have been too much to ask! — but of rice; and many of the passing pilgrims would throw a few rice grains — perhaps five or ten — on some

of the cloths — not chiefly for the benefit of the beggar, I presume, but for the acquisition of merit. The luckiest of these poor women whom we passed had as yet hardly collected more than two handfuls of rice. In one place we saw a band of music approaching us leading a company of women crowned with wreaths of jasmine. "Who are these in bright array?" I asked my friend the priest. "These," said he, "are public prostitutes coming to wash away their sins — and acquire a new crop." And so the living stream poured on all day. The official estimate of the numbers attending the mela from first to last was seven hundred thousand. The year previous there had been between one and two million.

In the middle of January the best place to wash away sin is probably Allahabad. But for a steady thing, day in and day out through the year, there is no place like Benares. It has been the center for this business a great many centuries. No one knows how old the city is. We only know that it was already ancient and very sacred five hundred years before the birth of Christ. It has been destroyed, piecemeal, many times, but it has always risen, like the Phœnix, from its ashes, more resplendent than ever. The rich and great have vied with each other in adorning it with temples and monasteries; and its water-front especially is one of the most picturesque sights to be found anywhere in the world. For two miles and a half the Ganges is bordered, on the city side, with temples and palaces, mosques and *dharamshalas* from which the ghats lead down to the water; and these are lined with men and women, in various brilliant costumes — or strange lack of costume — bathing and praying. It is a very busy scene, for religion is the one great business of Benares. Its streets and temples and ghats are forever full of a flood of strangers in two great streams, one of them arriving and importing with them into the city a little money and great quantities of sin, the other leaving for home lighter in both conscience and purse. The sins have gone into the Ganges, and the money into the pockets of the priests and the stomachs of the Brahmins. The detail of the process of ridding one's self of sin is very complex, but in general there are two things that one must do, namely, bathe in the river, with the recital of the proper prayers, and visit the most sacred

of the temples and do puja to Shiva, who in Benares is the Great God, Mahadev. Besides these things one must, as a matter of course, pay the priests liberally, both at the river and in the temples — and everywhere give alms to the holy men. These holy men, like those at Allahabad, are persuaded that it is more blessed to give than to receive; and they have consecrated their lives to making the pious pilgrims as blessed as possible. There are many monasteries and many dharamshalas, or rest-houses, where hundreds of them are fed every day. The mornings they spend on the ghats or near the temples, bathing, praying, begging alms, conversing, or simply "meditating." After their one daily meal they spend the entire afternoon meditating. The contemplative life is not a thing of the past in Benares. Most readers of this book will have heard of the old man who described his daily life by saying: "Sometimes I set and think, and sometimes I just set." It seems probable that, a large part of the time, most of the holy men of Benares "just set." It must be remembered, however, that the "holy men" most in evidence — loafing about the Golden Temple and making long prayers on the ghats — are far from representing the really spiritual side of the Hindu religion. Holy men there are in Benares much more worthy of this name; but these seldom do business on the water-front for the benefit of the tourist.

Religion, I have said, is a business on the Benares water-front; but it may be a pleasant or even a joyous business, mingling a mild gayety with earnestness and solemnity. When one has returned from the ghats he feels as if he had been visiting, all at once, a Catholic Church, a county fair, and Atlantic City. A few reverent men one will always find, finishing their ablutions and praying toward the sun with unmistakable devoutness. Many widows and other women there are, bathing carefully and seriously; and side by side with them others who seem to be having a rather jolly time of it. Children are there, running about all over the broad steps; barbers by the score plying their trade (for to have one's head shaved is a religious rite); snake-charmers exhibiting their scorpions and making necklaces of their serpents; *dhobis* or washerwomen — and washermen — slapping some sahib's clothes against a rock or pound-

ing them with a stone so that the buttons all come off — for soap is a luxury quite unknown to the Indian dhobi; ascetics and *sannyasins* begging baksheesh; would-be guides soliciting your patronage and boatmen offering their services; women climbing the steps, carrying homeward their daily load of Ganges water in brilliantly polished brass pots; coolies landing merchandise (for the ghats are used for commercial as well as for religious purposes) from rickety old tub-like sail-boats with moth-eaten sails that have come from Chunar or some more distant river town; and priests by the hundred, most of them fat, with bare arms and breasts, each sitting under a big straw umbrella, and busied in putting the mark of the Great God on the foreheads of the faithful — for a consideration. Then there are other men in little groups, engaged, like the coolies, in carrying burdens, but these not of a commercial nature — unless you count as such that commerce which sets out upon the Unknown Sea. These burdens of theirs are wound round with red or white cloth and fastened to two long bamboo poles with two men at each end. They have come through the streets of the city, and perhaps from some distant village, singing with every step: "Ram is true! Ram is true! He creates and He destroys." Arrived at the burning-ghat they set their burden down, dipping its feet in the river, and there they leave it till they have bought wood from the contractor (who regards business as business), and built the funeral pyre close to the water's edge. Before doing this they may have to wait till one of the fires they find burning has consumed its burden — for the burning-ghat is a busy place, night and day, and there is not always room for the newcomer. When the pyre is built the nearest relative of the deceased goes to the temple and haggles with the keeper of the sacred fire over the price of a spark; and having paid what is required he brings the fire down in smouldering straw and lights the pile. If the family can afford to buy enough wood, the body is completely consumed; in any case the ashes or whatever is left on the exhaustion of the fire is thrown into the sacred river; — and any failure on the part of the fire to do its full duty is made good by the fish and the crocodiles. Whatever it be, Mother Ganga receives it all into her bosom, and we need not inquire too curiously as to what

happens there. The Hindu does not inquire. When the fire is out, he breaks an earthen jar filled with water upon the spot where the pyre has burned, and, looking neither to the right nor to the left, goes homeward, thinking not of the body but of the spirit that is gone. For death is only an incident in the long journey of the Hindu pilgrim.

CHAPTER IV

THE MANY GODS

THE most popular god in India is Shiva, or Mahadev. His popularity is partly the result of his very complex character. He has absorbed into himself varying and even contradictory qualities, so that worshipers of every taste may be satisfied in him. His most ancient aspect is that of terror. In the Rig Veda — for he goes back to Vedic times — he is known as Rudra, the Ruddy, the Storm God, the Terrible One. He is the Destroyer, and deals in death; he is Time, and devours all. This ancient aspect of his character Shiva has in our times largely laid aside or rather has turned it over to his consort Kali. In fact the name "Shiva" itself means the "Auspicious One," and as such he is regarded not merely as the Destroyer, but still more as the Regenerator. If he destroys it is to renew: and thus destruction becomes, like many a process of nature, merely a part of eternal regeneration and development. In this sense the Great God might almost be described as the more or less personal Power of Nature, — a Power that is irresistible, omnipresent, and beyond good and evil. It is to this aspect of Shiva that the phallic elements in his worship belong. His is the Reproductive Power of Nature; and thus he is also the beneficent producer of blessings, the Eternally Blessed One. This aspect of Shiva gives him a kind of cosmic largeness which is typically Indian. A third aspect of the Great God is less cosmic, but not less characteristic of Indian thought. He is, namely, the Great Ascetic, dwelling alone among the mountains, in eternal meditation, passionless, immovable.[1] It is this perhaps more than anything else that has made Shiva the most popular god in India; for in being the perfect ascetic who has renounced everything and is plunged forever in meditation he

[1] Besides the three aspects of Shiva that I have described (Destroyer, Nature Force, Ascetic), Monier Williams enumerates two others: a learned sage, the revealer of grammar; a wild and jovial mountaineer, fond of dancing, drinking, and good living.

represents the dearest ideal of this land. Sister Nivedita can put this most important aspect of Shiva — and of India — much better than I: —

"In India life has one test, one standard, and one alone. Does a man know God or not? That is all. No question of fruits, no question of activity, no question of happiness. Only — has the soul set out on the quest of realization? . . . [When this is done] all the manifold satisfactions of the flesh become a burden. Home and kindred and intercourse with the world become a bondage. Food and sleep and the necessities of the physical life seem indifferent or intolerable. And so it comes that the Great God of the Hindu imagination is a beggar. Covered with the ashes of His sacrificial fire, so that He is white like snow, His hair growing untended in large masses, oblivious of cold or heat, silent, remote from men, He sits absorbed in eternal meditation. Those eyes of His are half closed. . . . But one faculty is all activity. Within it has been indrawn all the force of all the senses. Upright in the middle of the forehead looks forth the third eye, the eye of inner vision.

"He is the refuge of animals. About His neck are wound the serpents whom none else would receive. Never did He turn any away. The mad one, the eccentric, the crazed and queer, and the half-witted amongst men — for all these there is room with Shiva. His love will embrace even the demoniac. He accepts that which all reject. All the pain and evil of the universe He took as His share to save the world, when He drank the poison of things, and made His throat blue forever. He possesses so little! Only the old bull on which He rides, and the tiger-skin for meditation, and a string or two of praying beads — no more.

"Such is the picture that springs to the Indian mind as representing the Soul of the Universe — Shiva, the All-Merciful, the Destroyer of Ignorance, the Great God. . . . Perfect renunciation, perfect with-drawnness, perfect absorption in eternity — these things alone are worthy to be told concerning Him who is 'the Sweetest of the Sweet, the most Terrible of the Terrible, the Lord of Heroes, and the Wondrous-Eyed.'" [1]

[1] *Kali, the Mother* (London, Sonnenschein, 1900), pp. 30–33, somewhat abridged.

On the face of a rock at Mahabalipuram, a few miles south of Madras and near the sea, there is a gigantic relief, sculptured no one knows how many centuries ago, and called "The Penance of Arjun," which places the Indian's concept of Shiva before one's eyes in plastic form. In the center stands the Great God, while before him appear representatives of the whole animate creation from the supreme human being, the ascetic, down to the elephant with his mighty tusks and trunk, the human-headed cobra with his hood, and many another beast both real and mythical — all of them doing homage with unmistakable reverence to Mahadev.

It is uncertain whether the personal aspect of the Great God as the loving ascetic, or his impersonal aspect as the Force back of Nature, was most in the mind of the artist who chiseled this group — or is most in the mind of the Indian. The two aspects sway back and forward and alternate, one changing into the other. Shiva is made all things to all men that by all means he may please some. For those who desire a personal god he is the Great Hermit, seated among the eternal snows of the Himalayas; or (for the more vulgar) he is the Destroyer of Demons and the Protector of his own, dwelling in the heavenly Kailash with his wife and his two sons, his army of warrior spirits and the souls of his departed worshipers who have been faithful in their puja to him through life. For the more philosophical, — e.g., for the Shiva sect known as "Lingayats," — he is "infinite intelligence and joy, the creator of the world, and the instructor and redeemer of mankind."[1] For a large part of the Vedanta philosophers he is really one aspect of Brahman, the impersonal consciousness which alone is real. To these thinkers Shiva is the personification of the Impersonal, the manifestation of the Unmanifesting. And in this light Sister Nivedita writes of him: "Undoubtedly this Hindu idea of Shiva is the highest conception of God as approached by the spiritual intuition of man. He is the Divine accessible *within* and purified of all externals."[2]

Whether one can agree with Sister Nivedita in this high

[1] R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaisnavism, Saivism, and Minor Religious Systems* (Strassburg, Trübner, 1913), p. 156.

[2] *The Master as I saw Him* (Calcutta Udbodhan Office, 1910), p. 161.

praise will depend largely upon one's opinion on the question whether morality should be a part of the character of the Divine. In the conception of Shiva at its best the cosmic has nearly crowded out the moral; like other Indian gods he is too great to be good. He is "beyond good and evil." But whether the reader admires Shiva or not, he can now, I hope, understand to some extent the intense devotion of his votaries to their God. So highly cultured a thinker as Swami Vivekananda, a man who had lived in Europe and America for years and knew Western thought almost as well as Eastern, could find in Mahadev the fulfillment of nearly all his needs. In the ice-cavern of Amarnath among the Himalayas, a shrine of Shiva to which he made a pilgrimage, he had a vision of the Great God. "As he entered the Cave, it seemed to him as if he saw Shiva made visible before him. Amidst the buzzing, swarming noise of the pilgrim crowd, and the overhead fluttering of the pigeons, he knelt and prostrated two or three times unnoticed; and then, afraid lest emotion might overcome him, he rose and silently withdrew."[1] And again and again in hours of silent meditation and prayer he was overheard murmuring: "O Shiva! Shiva!" As Sister Nivedita says of Shiva's devotees in general: "To them there is nothing in the world so strong and pure and all-merciful as their God, and the books and poems of Hindus are very few in which he is not referred to with this passionate worship."[2]

Shiva is the most popular god in India, but he has not the largest number of *exclusive* worshipers. This honor is reserved for the other great god of Hinduism — Vishnu. These two gods, together with their wives and incarnations, divide between them almost the whole cult of Hinduism. Many Hindus worship both; but a great many devote themselves exclusively to the worship of one only, regarding him as the one divine reality, of whom all other gods are but names and forms. Devotees of a special god in this special way are known as sectarians; and the two great sects of India are, of course, the Vaishnavites or devotees of Vishnu, and the Shaivites or the devotees of Shiva. As I have indicated above, the Vaishnavites (if we include

[1] *The Master as I saw Him* (Calcutta Udbodhan Office, 1910), p. 158.
[2] *The Web of Indian Life* (London, Heinemann, 1904), p. 219.

among them the worshipers of Vishnu's incarnations) are the more numerous of the two.

The name Vishnu and his cult go back to Vedic times; but the god as conceived and worshiped to-day includes many other elements beside the Vedic. As a great river carries with it the waters of many a tributary, Vishnu has absorbed into himself the characteristics of several deities of the Indian past, with whom in the course of centuries he has become identified. Mr. Bhandarkar has recently pointed out four of these as especially important: (1) the Vedic Vishnu, who was a sun god; (2) Vasudeva, perhaps originally a man who after his death was deified, and whose cult came to be especially characterized by devotion and by a theistic rather than a pantheistic view of God; (3) Narayana, a name for the Supreme (and pantheistic) Spirit in late Brahmanic times: and (4) Krishna — of whom more presently.[1]

Being combined from so many different elements, the conception of Vishnu, like that of Shiva, varies with his various worshipers. He is sometimes pictured as a personal being, dwelling with his wife in a definite locality; sometimes he is conceived as the Infinite Spirit, present everywhere and appearing in all phenomena as the Real behind the seeming. This larger and philosophical aspect is more emphasized by worshipers than is the philosophic aspect of Shiva; and his more definitely personal side is correspondingly undeveloped. Still, something may be said of it. Vishnu resides in a distant heaven with his wife Lakshmi — in fact some give him three wives. Like Shiva he has four hands, each of which is commonly represented as holding an emblem peculiar to himself — usually the conch, symbolic of creative sound, the mace for sovereignty, the *charkra* (or wheel) for energy, and the lotus for spirit and matter. Often he is pictured as reclining with his wife on the great serpent Sesha, while Brahmā — the ancient creator — issues from his navel. If Brahmā is the Creator and Shiva the Destroyer, Vishnu is the Preserver. There is nothing in his cult (as in that of Shiva) that is frightful or terrible. He is emphatically the Indian God of Love — with all that that implies for good and evil. For his philosophical worshiper he is,

[1] Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*

of course, much more than this, being in fact the sole Reality, of whom the entire material world and all spirits of men and gods form but the body. This, however, is a conception that will detain us in a later chapter. But here something must be said of one unique and most important characteristic of Vishnu, namely, the conception that he has appeared to men and lived among them in the form of *avatars* or incarnations.

No one can say why or how this doctrine of incarnation arose, but once started it proved peculiarly popular among Vaishnavites, and in fact Vishnu is worshiped to-day chiefly through his avatars. He has, indeed, incarnated himself not once but many times, the number usually being put at ten. Several of these were animal forms; but as only two of Vishnu's incarnations, and these both human, are taken seriously by Hindus to-day, I shall not trouble the reader with the list. The list is, indeed, retained by pious Hindus *pro forma* — just as the doctrine of the damnation of unbaptized infants and of the heathen was long retained by many good Christians as a pious form of words long after all real belief in it had become impossible. But that God — the one God — became incarnate in the man Rama or in the man Krishna is a very living belief with millions of devout Vaishnavites.

Of these two incarnations Ram or Rama (both spellings are common) is the older and (according to Western notions) the more admirable; he is also the less popular. Some divisions of the Vaishnavite sect regard him as very God of very God — hardly even as an incarnation. To them the one great name for God is "Ram." He first appears in the heroic poem of Valmiki (written perhaps 500 B.C.) as a brave and noble prince, with, however, no suggestion of being in any sense divine. The story of the loss of his faithful wife Sita and his recovery of her is one of the favorite tales of India and has exerted a considerable influence for thousands of years in moulding Indian ideals of manly courage and womanly fidelity and devotion. Sita is stolen by the arch-demon Ravana and eventually recovered by Rama, who slays the demon through the aid of his faithful friend Hanuman, the monkey god. Incidentally let me add that the story thus explains the popularity of Hanuman, who to us Westerners, ignorant of Hindu mythology,

seems a very horrid creature because we take him to be merely a monkey; while to the Hindu he stands for all that is fine in faithful friendship. This original story of Ram and his friends long antedates the Indian concept of incarnation. When, now, the new idea had taken root, Rama was made one of Vishnu's avatars, and Valmiki's poem was to some extent made over (by additions and interpolations); and finally in the Ramayana,[1] written about 1600 by Tulsi Das in Hindi, — the real Bible of the Rama worshipers to-day, — Rama is portrayed as the complete incarnation of the Absolute and Supreme Spirit. The old story is retained and repeated, but not for a moment are we allowed to forget that Rama, for all his human form, is in fact the Supreme Being. The mystery and beauty of the incarnation idea has seldom been more strikingly expressed. The following lines will convey some notion of the general religious attitude of the poem toward the Incarnate One: —

"Seers and sages, saints and hermits, fix on Him their reverent gaze.
And in faint and trembling accents Holy Scripture hymns His praise.
He, the omnipresent Spirit, Lord of heaven and earth and hell,
To redeem his people, freely, has vouchsafed with men to dwell." [2]

The Gospel of Rama according to Tulsi Das is certainly one of the most important and widespread influences in Hinduism to-day. Ninety million people in upper India are said to accept it as the core of their religion. According to Mr. Grierson, "All forms of religion, all beliefs and all forms of non-belief in the ordinary polytheism of the many Hindu cults, were to Tulsi Das but so many accidents beside the great truths on which he was never weary of laying stress: namely, that there is one Supreme Being; that sin is hateful, not because it defiles the sinner, but because it is incompatible with the Supreme Being; that man is by nature infinitely sinful and unworthy of salvation; that, nevertheless, the Supreme Being, in his infinite mercy, became incarnate in the person of Rama to relieve the world of sin; that this Rama has returned to heaven, and is there, as Rama, now; that mankind has therefore a God who is not only infinitely merciful but who knows by actual experience how

[1] This is the name by which the poem is commonly known; the name given it by its author is Rama Manas Charita.

[2] Translation by Growse (Allahabad, 1883).

great are man's infirmities and temptations, and who, though himself incapable of sin, is ever ready to extend his help to the sinful being that calls upon him." [1]

Rama, whether in his anthropomorphic or in his more philosophical form, is certainly one of the finest figures of the Hindu pantheon. He is not, however, the most commonly worshiped. In popularity he cannot equal Vishnu's other great avatar — Krishna. But while Krishna is much more popular than Rama, the origin of his worship is thought by many to have been humbler, and his character as depicted in the story of his incarnation is unquestionably less noble. The Indians, of course, believe Krishna to have been a real historical person, and in this they have the backing of some Western scholars — notably of Professor Garbe, whose *Einleitung* to his recent translation of the Bhagavad Gita is one of the most important studies of the Krishna cult. Professor Garbe believes Krishna to have lived about two hundred years before Buddha, to have been the son of Vasudeva, to have founded a monotheistic and ethical religion, and eventually to have been deified and identified with the monotheistic god Vasudeva whose worship he founded.[2] Whether this be accepted or not, there are certain elements in the Krishna cult, as found in the Puranas and various other books, which are far from moral and which do not seem to have originated in the rather pure worship of Vasudeva. Professor Bhandarkar supposes that these elements originated among a nomadic tribe of cowherds, whose god came to be identified with that of Krishna-Vasudeva when, about the beginning of the Christian era, they migrated from the Punjab to the Ganges Valley. However this may be, the cult of Krishna Vasudeva was early associated with that of Vishnu, and when the incarnation concept became popular he was accepted as the chief avatar of the Supreme Being, and in fact as quite identical with him.

"Though birthless and unchanging of essence" (Krishna-Vishnu is made in the Bhagavad Gita to say of himself) "and though Lord of born beings, yet in my sway over the Nature

[1] *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. II (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1909), p. 418.

[2] *Die Bhagavad Gita* (Leipsig, Hoessal, 1905), pp. 19–37.

that is mine own I come into birth by mine own magic. For whensoever Religion fails and lawlessness uprises, I bring myself to bodied birth. To guard the righteous, to destroy evildoers, to establish Religion I come into birth age after age." [1]

As I have said, Krishna is considered by all good Hindus a historical character. The story of his life is told in several of the Vaishnavite Puranas (or historico-theological works), while he is represented as the speaker in that most sacred book of all Hindu religious literature, the Bhagavad Gita. The story told in the Puranas, if taken literally, does not make very elevated reading; but in the earlier Puranas, at any rate, it is impossible to take the story literally, so obvious and unescapable is the intent of the writer to present not so much a tale as an allegory of God and the soul. Krishna is a man — yes, in a sense. Yet at every turn the god shines through. Whoever reads the Vishnu Purana or the Bhagavad Purana in literal and legalistic fashion will therefore quite miss the point. One must take the Oriental point of view and be prepared for much symbolism if he would understand.

The incarnation of Vishnu in the human form of Krishna and the consequent spread of true religion is thus portrayed in the Vishnu Purana: "The divine Vishnu himself, the god of the vast universal tree, inscrutable by the understanding of all the gods, demons, and sages past, present, and to come, he who is without beginning, middle or end, being moved to relieve the earth of her load, descended into the womb of Devaki and was born as her son Vasudeva [=Vishnu=Krishna]. Yoganindra, proud to execute his orders, removed the embryo to Yasoda, the wife of Nandi the cowherd. At his birth the earth was relieved from all iniquity; the sun, moon, and planets shone with unclouded splendor; all fear of calamitous portents was dispelled; and universal happiness prevailed. From the moment he appeared all mankind were led into the righteous path in him. While this Powerful Being resided in this world he had 16,000 wives. . . . By these the Universal Form begot 180,000 sons." [2]

[1] Bhagavad Gita, IV, 6–8. Barnett's translation (London, Dent, 1905).
[2] Vishnu Purana, IV, 15. Wilson's translation (London, Trübner, 1864–77).

Krishna was thus born in a most lowly condition, as the son of a cowherd, and was brought up by his foster father Nandi and his — what shall we call her? — quasi-mother Yasoda, in their rude and rustic home, which is now identified by pious Hindus as the village of Mahaban, on the Jumna. Throughout his infancy and babyhood he performed many marvelous and magical exploits, but nothing in the story suggests that he had any kind of moral distinction. Like other rustics he played upon the flute and loved the dance, and all the milkmaids of the country-side — the "Gopis" as they are called — lost their hearts to him. His exploits among them seem to have been anything but exemplary. This decidedly immoral element in the Krishna concept probably came from the original Krishna legend of the wandering tribes of herdsmen with whom his cult is thought to have originated. It is interesting, therefore, to note that the philosophic writer of the Vishnu Purana makes use of this erotic element in the same way in which Christian theologians and especially Christian mystics in the Middle Ages made use of the erotic elements in the Song of Songs. To all of these writers earthly love was merely a symbol of the relation of the soul to God. "Whilst He was frolicking thus with the Gopis," says the Vishnu Purana, "they considered every instant without Him as a myriad of years. . . . Thus the illimitable Being, the benevolent remover of all imperfections, assumed the character of youth amongst the maidens of the herdsmen of Vraja; pervading their natures and that of their lords by His own essence, all-diffusive like the wind. For even as in all creatures the elements of ether, fire, earth, water, and air are comprehended, so also is He everywhere present and in all." [1]

Even in the Purana, then, Krishna makes no pretense at being chaste or pure. When the question arose who should be entrusted with a certain miraculous jewel, Krishna said it must be kept only by some person who was pure. "Now," he added, "as I have 16,000 wives I am not qualified for the care of it." The conception of the Puranas seems to be both that the actions of the god are sport, and that the moral category does not apply to him, and also that most of the tales concerning him have a symbolical as well as a literal significance.

[1] Vishnu Purana, v, 13.

It is, perhaps, in part, this elusive, this multiform nature of Krishna that has made him, next to Shiva, the most popular deity of Hinduism. By his many attributes he is able to appeal to the high and to the low, to the philosophical and the ignorant, to the lofty and the immoral. The picture of the Infinite God in the body of a little helpless child has the same immense appeal in India that it has in Christendom. As every Catholic church at Christmas-time has its *crêche*, with a miniature Jesus lying in a manger, so all over India you will find shrines of the baby Krishna, in which images of the divine child are tended as if it were a living baby. The center of his worship is Mahaban, where according to the tale his infancy was passed. It is a place of pilgrimage to pious Vaishnavites, and I made a pilgrimage thither among them. The center of interest in the little isolated village is the so-called "Palace of Nandi" — a hall with many curiously carved stone pillars, near one end of which are large wooden images of Nandi and Yasoda, Krishna's foster father and mother, while mementoes of Krishna's boyhood are preserved with pious credulity and care in various parts of the building — the most important of these being an enormous cane which is exhibited as Yasoda's churning-stick. But the devotion of the good Vaishnavite worshipers is centered on a large cradle in which sits a baby doll, gorgeously dressed, and representing, of course, the infant Krishna. A big Brahmin priest was standing by the cradle as we entered the hall, deferentially rocking it, so as to give the baby god his daily nap. This is part of the regular service, performed in many a temple of Krishna every day. I append in a note other details of the cult, as practiced by one of the sub-sects of the Vaishnavas.[1]

[1] After an elaborate series of performances, — bathing, the recitation of mantras, etc., — the devotee "should approach the bedroom [of the child Krishna] and sing a song calling upon Krishna to rise from sleep, to take refreshments prepared for him and to go with his companions to the forest for grazing the cows. Krishna should be brought out and placed on the throne. Radha [his favorite wife] should be placed on his left hand and then the worshiper should prostrate himself before her. The refreshments already prepared should then be placed before them, and they should be requested to eat them. Then the bed should be dusted and cleaned and Krishna should be made to wash his mouth. Other refreshments should then be placed before the two. At the end of all, a waving of lamps should be gone through

The boy Krishna is even a greater favorite than the baby. All over India images and pictures of him are to be found, in the easy posture of boyhood, playing on the pipe [1] — symbol of the divine activity which is always play. When these representations of Krishna are in color, the color is always deep blue. This does not please Western eyes, and the tourist is therefore likely to conclude that Krishna is a "horrid little nigger" — not knowing that nearly everything in India is symbolic and that the blue of Krishna's face, like the blue of the sea and of the sky, in the eyes of the Hindu stands for infinity.

"The popular and growing belief of the Hindu masses," writes Sister Nivedita, "consists of various forms of the worship of Krishna. It is this creed that carries to those who need it a religious emotionalism like that of the Salvation Army or of Methodism. In the hottest nights, during periods of 'revivals,' the streets of a city will be crowded with men bearing lights and banners, and dancing themselves into a frenzy to such words as: —

> "'Call on the Lord,
> Call on the Lord,
> Call on the Lord, little brother!
> Than this name of the Lord
> For mortal man
> There is no other way.'

He is known as the Holy Child, born in humility amidst cowherds by the Jumna; the Gentle Shepherd of the People, the Wise Counsellor, the Blessed Lord, tender Lover and Savior of the human soul; and by other names not less familiar to ourselves. It is an image of the baby Krishna that the Indian mother adores as the Bambino, calling it 'Gopala,' her

with song. Then comes the bath. After bathing, saffron paint should be applied [to the image]. He should then be dressed and milk be given him. Afterwards by the churning of milk froth should be prepared and offered to Krishna. He should then be told to wash his mouth with water. Then betel leaves should be offered him. Then a cradle should be adorned and Krishna should be told to get into it, and it should be rocked and toys be got ready for the divine boy. Afterwards the midday dinner should be prepared. . . . In this manner the ceremonies go on. A meal is again prepared at night and Krishna is laid on the sleeping-cot and made to sleep again." (Bhandarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 81.) This is a description of the cult as practiced by the Vallabha sect.

[1] See the illustration facing p. 86.

cowherd. His name fills gospels and poems, the folk-songs of all Hindu races are full of descriptions of Him as a cowherd wandering and sporting amongst His fellows; and childish literature is full of stories of Him curiously like European tales of the Christ-child. To the ecstatic mystic, He is the Divine Spouse." [1]

The reader will have noted, without my pointing them out to him, the two very diverging tendencies in the concept of Krishna, one lofty, philosophical, mystic, the other low and sensual. Both these elements in the Krishna concept have had their influence and their following; and so we find, besides the general and popular Krishna cult, two groups of special devotees, one of whom has emphasized the erotic and one the philosophical aspect of their god. The former and lower of these tendencies is seen in several Vaishnavite sects, some of which center their worship particularly on Radha, who in the later sectarian works is represented as Krishna's favorite mistress. In their worship of the passionate pair these Vaishnavites regard sexual passion as the type of divine love and as the means of entering into communion with the deity.[2] The climax of this "religious" filth was attained by the sect founded about 1500 by Vallabha and still existing in parts of India. This man not only preached the doctrine of divine union by means of sensual passion indicated above, but succeeded in persuading his many followers that he and all his male descendants were incarnations of Krishna. I cannot detail here the unspeakably vile practices to which this led, but some of them may be imagined: and the reader can find them exposed at length in "The History of the Sect of the Maharajas," [3] which reports

[1] *The Web of Indian Life*, pp. 224–25.

[2] This abuse of Vaishnavism has its parallel in an abuse of Christianity to be found in an offshoot of the Russian Church called the Skoptsy. Among the members of this sect the Virgin Mary has a position similar to that of Radha among the sensual sects of Vaishnavites. She is represented in their meetings by a beautiful girl; and their methods of attaining union with the Divine are quite on a par with those of India. But these Russian Christians are not content with licentious worship. They add to it the horror of eating human flesh which they have cut from the girl whom they adore as the Madonna. See Tsakni, *La Russie Sectaire* (Paris, Plon et Nourrit, 1888), chap. v.

[3] Published in London, 1865.

the findings at the famous Bombay libel suit in 1860, in which the bestialities of this "religious" sect were brought to light.

In connection with this sensual aspect of the lower forms of Hinduism, an Indian philosopher said to me: "An earnest effort is being made to put a stop to this sort of thing, but it has not succeeded and probably never will succeed fully. The sect of the Maharajas, for instance, probably continues its erotic practices, though it received a severe blow in the libel suit. And the worst of it is that when this evil is suppressed in one place it breaks out in another. There is no doubt that in various parts of India sensual practices are sanctioned and encouraged in the name of religion. It seems to be inherent in human nature for it to break out somewhere. I am told that in Europe it takes cover under the name 'Art.' In India its cover is Religion instead. — It seems as if the writers of some of the ancient books, seeing that this sort of thing was inevitable in human nature, had deliberately made some place for it in religion, as a kind of vent for filth."

It must be remembered, however, that this erotic aspect of Vaishnavism is confined to a relatively small part of the sect as a whole, and that in every land and in almost every form of faith parallel instances are to be found in which sensualism is mistaken for religion, or at least seeks to disguise itself under some pious name. The great majority of the more devoted followers of Krishna find excesses such as these most repugnant. To them "Sri Krishna" is the embodiment of all that is purest and noblest; and it is especially in the more spiritual aspects and relations and emotions of life that they believe they find the Lord, — though indeed, for them he is also present everywhere. "All our human relations," writes a contemporary Vaishnavite philosopher, "are mere reflexes of these relations as they exist in His own being. Sri Krishna thus spiritualizes all these social relations, even as He spiritualizes our physical activities and enjoyments. In his master the devout Vaishnava thus sees his Krishna. In his personal friends he realizes and relishes Krishna as Friend. In his son and father, in his daughter or mother, he realizes and serves his Krishna. In his conjugal life and relation he realizes and enjoys the highest, the deepest love of Krishna. It is thus that in Hindu Vaishna-

vism we have a more thorough, more concrete, at once a more real and a more ideal presentation of the Universal than perhaps we have in any other culture. In Vaishnavism the innate sense of the Spirit and the Universal of the Indo-Aryan Race-Consciousness seems to have found its loftiest and deepest expression. If you wish to visualize the soul of India you must seek and find it in Sri Krishna."[1]

To Vaishnavas of this type, the great religious book is not the Puranas, — and especially not the late and erotic Puranas, — but the Bhagavad Gita, the "Divine Song" which Krishna the incarnate God sang to the warrior Arjuna before the great battle of Kurukshetra. The Gita is the gospel of India, the gospel of the union of the human soul with the Personal but All-inclusive God. It is the crown of Indian religious literature, and it is to the great credit of the cultured Hindus that it is the most popular book in India. And the Gita is the very heart of the more philosophical religion of Vishnu and of Krishna. Yet for even a partial understanding of it one must know something of Indian philosophy. Hence further consideration of it must be postponed to the next chapter.

The two great gods of India, as I have said, are Shiva and Vishnu. But most of the gods have wives, and one of these goddesses is of considerable importance. As a rule, to be sure, an Indian goddess is only a pale and almost impersonal reflection of her husband. She is regarded usually as a mere personification of his *shakti*, or power. Some additional function, to be sure, is occasionally given to a goddess: — thus Sarasvati, the wife of Brahmā, is the goddess of learning, and Lakshmi, Vishnu's beautiful consort, is the goddess of wealth. But even so, these heavenly ladies are of no great importance and have little independent power or significance of their own. Far otherwise is it, however, with the wife of Shiva. Shiva has but one wife, but she is a lady of many names and many natures. As Parvati or Uma she is modestly subject to her husband, as every Hindu wife should be; but as Kali, Durga, or Devi, she has a power in heaven and a cult on earth all her own. As an Indian friend of mine put it, she is a kind of militant suffragette. In Bengal — the province in which resides the largest

[1] Bipin Chandra Pal, *The Soul of India*, pp. 315–16.

proportion of cultured Hindus — she is the most loved and feared and worshiped of all the Heavenly ones. And in India as a whole only Vishnu and Shiva excel her in popularity and importance.

Her cult is commonly known as "Shaktism," for it is not so much the cult of a personal deity as that of Nature as a whole, regarded as the *female energy*, the active force, of which the inactive and contemplative Shiva is the counterpart. In one sense all the goddesses are involved in Shaktism, all the goddesses and female spirits and even women, as embodiments of *das Ewig Weibliche* which is the active principle in things, and of which Kali or Durga is the personification. Thus Kali, or Shakti as she is also called, has largely taken over the *Nature* side of her husband Shiva. He is the Eternal Spirit, the soul of things, while "She is the Force that stands behind the evolution of the Universe, working out the infinite changes through which the Absolute is progressively realizing Himself in the cosmic process." [1] More often still she is for the philosopher the personification of "Maya," the Great Illusion, which (as we shall see in our next chapter) Brahman spreads as a veil before our eyes. She is, in short, Nature or the cosmic process which prevents us from seeing the Absolute and It alone. Thus she is the Creator and Mother of all finite and separate things, the gods and even Shiva himself included. In the Mahanirvana Tantra Shiva says to her: "Thou art the only Para Prakriti [material Nature] of the Supreme Soul Brahman, and from Thee as its Mother has sprung the whole universe. O gracious One! whatever there is in this world, of things that have been and are without motion, from intelligence to atom, owes its origin to and is dependent upon Thee. Thou art the origin of all manifestations: Thou art the birthplace even of us [Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva]. Thou knowest the whole world, yet none know Thee." [2]

Shakti is thus the personification of the cosmic Forces, or even of Power in general. When Mazoomdar returned from a visit in Europe he told Ramakrishna — the devout worshiper of Kali — that the philosophers of Europe were not atheists,

[1] Bipin Chandra Pal, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
[2] IV, 10–12. Translation by "Arthur Avalon" (London, Luzac, 1913).

since they believed in an "Eternal Energy — an unknown Power behind the Universe" — apparently referring to Spencer's "Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed." Ramakrishna jumped at this at once, recognizing in the Spencerian formula his own Kali. And a recent writer in the "Prabuddha Bharata" [1] interprets the teaching of Nietzsche as being essentially the worship of Shakti.

The way to salvation, then, is through subjection to the Mother and by uniting one's self with her. "Those who, through spiritual illumination, love, and devotion, can identify themselves with the Universal Mother, become like Her, the lords of birth and death. They rise above the wheel of Karma, break through the bondage of the phenomenal, and attain final emancipation." [2]

This rather philosophical view of the goddess is, of course, held by the rank and file of her worshipers only in a very vague fashion. "For most of them," as an Indian philosopher said to me, "she is the female power manifest in Nature, who, combined with the male power represented by Shiva, makes the totality of all things. By these people she is always taken as a person, and often quite anthropomorphically. She is a goddess who brings earthly blessings to those who propitiate her — and who can be terrible to her foes." One of the priests at the great Kali temple at Kalighat, in Calcutta, described the goddess to me as holding in her two left hands (for she has a minimum of four hands and a maximum of ten) a knife and a skull, to destroy or frighten the wicked, while one of her right hands is open for the reception of offerings from the good, and the other is raised in blessing. She is the symbol of Eternity or of All-devouring Time. No other Indian religious conception, he added, had been so misrepresented by Europeans; for behind her cult and behind the popular ideas of her there was a very profound and noble philosophy. I asked him what this philosophy was, and he said he did n't know himself, but if I would call on Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal I could find out.[3] This

[1] For January, 1915, p. 5. [2] *Hindu Review*, August, 1913, p. 104.

[3] I took the priest's advice, and excellent advice it proved to be. Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal is not himself a devotee of Shakti, but he is a student of the subject, and puts it in quite a different light from that which one gets

priest was very typical of the less intelligent Indian devotee. There are millions of men in India who are very zealous for the good name of their deity and who are sure that there is a very fine philosophy back of his cult; and though they themselves have but slight inkling as to what that philosophy may be, they are extremely proud of it, and can usually tell you what man to see or what books to read if you wish to study it for yourself.

There are two aspects of Shiva as the power of Nature which have been almost entirely taken over by his consort: namely, the mystery of reproduction, and the terror of destruction and death. The erotic side of Shaktism has been appropriated by a small branch of the worshipers of Kali, known as the "Left Hand School." The sensual practices in which they indulge in connection with their religion may owe their origin to some primitive aboriginal tribe; but as they exist to-day they have been profoundly influenced by the philosophy of the school. Their fundamental idea is not mystic union with the Deity (as is the case with the erotic school of Vaishnavism), but the acquisition and control of Power.[1]

The conception of Kali as the destructive power of Nature, the Frightful One, is much more widespread and general. The commonest picture of Kali represents her in a riot of blood and carnage. Skulls and severed heads hang from her neck, her tongue, thirsting for more blood, protrudes from her mouth, and she stands with one foot on the prostrate body of her husband. For the story goes that "when Kali was engaged in her work of destruction, she so completely forgot herself that she did not stop with the killing and conquest of her enemies, but

from most books. The reader will do well to consult his *Soul of India*, from which I have several times quoted.

[1] According to Monier Williams some members of the Left Hand School even go so far as to indulge in promiscuous intercourse as a part of their cult. Farquhar repeats the charge in his recent *Modern Religious Movements in India* (New York, Macmillan, 1915). Neither author gives his authority, and I do not know how much basis there is for the assertion. Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal assures me that if this practice ever existed it certainly exists no longer, and that it is altogether out of keeping with the Indian character. An instance quite parallel to it is to be found in an offshoot of the Orthodox Russian Church, known as the "Christs." For an account of their practices see N. Tsakni, *La Russie Sectaire*, chap. IV, and Severac, *La Secte Russe des Hommes-de-Dieu* (Paris, Cornéley, 1906), pp. 75–81.

threatened in her passion for war and carnage to work universal ruin. And it was then that Shiva, the symbol of the Good, who alone in all the worlds could stand the passion of the dread goddess, threw himself down at her feet, and thus brought her back to herself." [1]

The popularity of Kali as an object of worship is thus in part an expression of the fascination of the terrible. Vivekananda wrote of her: —

"Scattering plague and sorrows,
Dancing made with joy,
Come, O Mother, come!
For Terror is Thy name.

"Death is in Thy breath.
And every shaking step
Destroys a world for e'er.
Who dares misery love
Dance in Destruction's dance
And hug the form of Death —
To him the Mother comes." [2]

This gifted Bengalee mystic, with all his knowledge of the West and of the East, was quite as devoted to Kali as he was to Shiva. And it seems to have been her terrible aspect that most attracted him. He insisted upon seeing God everywhere, in the evil as well as in the good; hence a cult which deified even the dreadful had for him an especial appeal. "His own effort," writes Sister Nivedita, "being constantly to banish fear and weakness from his own consciousness and to learn to recognize the Mother as instinctively in evil, terror, sorrow, and annihilation, as in that which makes for sweetness and joy, it followed that the one thing he could not away with was any sort of watering down of the great conception. 'Fools,' he exclaimed once — as he dwelt in quiet talk on the worship of the Terrible, on becoming one with the Terrible — 'Fools! they put a garland of flowers round Thy neck and call Thee the Merciful.' . . . One saw that the true attitude of the mind and will which are not to be baffled by the personal self, was in fact the determination, in the stern words of the Swami Vivekananda, 'to seek death not life, to hurl one's self

[1] Bipin Chandra Pal, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
[2] Quoted by Sister Nivedita in *The Master as I Saw Him.*

upon the sword's point, to become one with the Terrible forevermore.'" [1]

Not all of Kali's worshipers desire to become one with the Terrible. And yet the fascination of her more dreadful aspect is widespread, and is reflected in the bloody offerings in her temples. The Hindu feels that the weekly sacrifice of goats to this goddess of Death is only fitting. When Sister Nivedita mildly protested against it to Swami Vivekananda, he replied, "Why not a little blood to complete the picture?"

And yet Kali has her more tender aspect; and, strange as it must seem to us, this Terrible One is throughout Bengal not only feared but loved and is spoken of as "The Mother." Ramakrishna, one of the most saintly mystics that India produced in the last century, worshiped her with a passionate adoration of which we Westerners apparently can form but a dim conception. His relation to her, in vision and in trance, was strikingly similar to that of many a Christian mystic to the Madonna. It was of her that he talked, it was her teaching, so he was persuaded, and not his own that he gave his disciples. "After the regular forms of worship [in the temple of Kali] he would sit there for hours and hours, singing hymns and talking and praying to her as a child to his mother, till he lost all consciousness of the outer world. Sometimes he would weep for hours and would not be comforted, because he could not see his Mother as perfectly as he wished." [2] He felt himself a little child in her great arms, and in every religion not his own he saw the worship of the Divine Mother in disguise. This feeling for Kali, as a name for the Motherhood of God, was caught by many of his disciples. Vivekananda, his favorite

[1] *The Master as I Saw Him*, pp. 209–10. We may wonder at this belief in the terrible side of God: yet one need not go far to find in the God of many good Christians a great deal of the Kali nature. The Old Testament, of course, is full of it, as is also much of Puritanism. "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." In Dr. Clough's recent book concerning his mission to the Telugus I find a description of a terrific cyclone which wrecked most of the mission property and wrought tremendous havoc to the entire district; and after the description the following comment: "I wondered what all this meant. I wrote to Boston that I thought that our God means to show what He is able to do — to build up here among the heathen, and then how easily He can undo all." — Is not this Kali?

[2] Max Müller, *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings* (London, Longmans, 1910), p. 36.

pupil, years afterwards said, "How I used to hate Kali! and all Her ways! That was the ground of my six years' fight — that I would not accept Her. But I had to accept Her at last. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa dedicated me to Her, and now I believe that She guides me in every little thing that I do, and does with me what She will!" And at another time he said that wherever he turned he was conscious of the presence of the Mother as if she were a person in the room.[1]

Nor is this feeling for Durga or Kali as the Divine and Universal Mother confined to men like Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Many and many a Bengalee of limited intelligence and education looks up to this strange Being, in whom we outsiders see only the grotesque or the abominable, and they find in her at least some of the supernatural comfort for which we all at times have so great a need. Listen, for instance, to this passage from the farewell letter of a Calcutta girl who was about to commit suicide to save her father from financial ruin: —

"Last night I dreamt a dream, father, which made me take my vow. To the enthralling strains of a music unheard before, and amid a blaze of light as never was on land or sea, I saw the Divine Mother Durga, with benignant smile, beckoning me to the abode of the blest up above, and then I thought of you, father, of the ever sorrow-laden face of my beloved mother and of the dear little ones who have done so much to brighten our home. And then I resolved to save you all and made a sign to the Divine Mother that I would not delay obeying her merciful call. . . . And now, dear father, farewell. The hour of sacrifice is come. All nature is slumbering peacefully and ere long I am going to fall into that sleep which knows no waking. A strange and sweet sensation overpowers me. Up above in my new home, at the lotus feet of the Divine Mother and lying within the light of uncreated rays, as I used to lie upon your loving breast, I have only to wait a little while till you and mother come!"[2]

[1] Sister Nivedita, *op. cit.*, pp. 214 and 162.

[2] For a further account of this heroic girl, see p. 176. Her farewell letter was, of course, written in Hindi, and I do not doubt that the translator has taken considerable liberties with the original. The references to Durga, how-

I have devoted many pages to Shiva, Vishnu, and Kali, because these are the great deities of Hinduism. The "Hindu Trinity," to be sure, of which we in the West hear a good deal, — the "Trimurti" as the Indians call it, — consists of Brahmā, Vishnu, and Shiva, regarded respectively as the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer. But one hears but little of the Trimurti in India to-day except as a matter of ancient tradition or theological theory. It is not a living part of the religion of the people. Brahmā is an antiquated deity who really went out of business long ago, and has been retired on a pension of purely verbal honor these many centuries. He has no cult of his own.[1] The only gods that have special cults are the three we have studied (including under Vishnu his incarnations) and two others — Ganesh and Surya. Ganesh is the elephant-headed eldest son of Shiva. He is the god of good luck and also of wisdom, and has rather a wide cult which to-day is growing with considerable rapidity. According to Mr. Murdoch, "there is no god more frequently invoked in India than Ganesh. Being looked upon as the remover of obstacles, his assistance is considered necessary in every undertaking. . . . Many persons never commence a letter without praying to Ganesh."[2] His image is one of the most familiar in India, for not only is it in a large proportion of Hindu temples and even in some temples of the Jainas and Sikhs, but one finds it in many a private dwelling, on the outside or inside — just as with us one nails a horseshoe over the door for good luck, or puts on one's bookshelves a carved owl as a symbol of learning.

Surya is an old Vedic sun god, and though he has hardly any temples of his own, it is to him that every good Hindu prays at least once a day when he repeats the *Gayatri* — the prayer or invocation which to the Hindu is as sacred as the *Pater Noster* is to us.

These, then, are the chief gods of modern India. But they are far from the only ones. In the times of the Rig Veda it was

ever, are none the less significant of the general and popular feeling in Bengal for her.

[1] Not absolutely exact. He has two temples, both in Rajputana.

[2] *Siva Bhakti*, p. 26.

said that the gods were thirty-three in number; and since that time the Brahmins have multiplied their deities by an even million. And, indeed, if one should start to count up the gods of village and forest and mountain and stream, the tree spirits and the water spirits and the spirits of the deified dead, he would probably not be tempted long to contest the official figures of 33,000,000.[1] Yet the assertion that Hindus believe in 33,000,000 gods is likely to be extremely misleading if we simply leave it without further comment. The Hindu pantheon is a very different thing from the Greek pantheon. I hope my description of Shiva, Vishnu, and Kali has shown how very unstable and shadowy are the natures of the Hindu deities; but any description, just because it seeks to describe, is bound to make the Hindu concept seem more clear and sharp than it really is. Zeus and Hermes and Aphrodite were personalities with characteristics quite as distinct as Agamemnon and Achilles. When we turn to India all this is changed. The Indians have always been noted for a weak sense of personality, both in reference to themselves and in reference to their gods. Personality seems to them limitation — something to be outgrown if possible. Hence their gods are always on the verge of melting into each other. They form one whole, a divine world, rather than an Olympian assembly of personages.

To counterbalance this loss of personality, the Hindu deities have a large symbolism, a kind of *cosmic* quality, which the Greek and Hebrew and some even of the Christian concepts of the Divine quite lack. Compare, for instance, Kali with the Madonna. The pictures of Kali are certainly horrible, — they are meant to be, — while the Madonna represents the supreme beauty of womanhood — motherhood and virginity miraculously combined. And yet there is something in the red-handed Kali, gloating over her slaughter, which (in part just because she is less personal) suggests the universal, symbolic, cosmic, in a way that the greatest paintings of the Virgin never do. The Madonna is a person; Kali is a Nature Force.

[1] For a large proportion of the Indians these *devatas*, or "godlings," are very much more important than the great gods, or *devas*, described in this chapter. Perhaps the best treatment of these devatas is in Crooke's *Popular Religion and Folklore of India* (Allahabad, Government Press, 1894).

Largely as a result of this cosmic quality of the Hindu gods they are notably lacking in moral characteristics. They have caught from Nature, or from the impersonal power back of Nature, a complete indifference to moral questions. They are bringers of good — yes, but they are also bringers of evil. To attribute a moral nature to the Divine would be in Indian eyes a belittling of it. As we shall see later on, there is, indeed, one sense in which the universe as a whole is supremely moral — in that good and evil inevitably and automatically work out their own retribution. But the gods have nothing to do with this, and so far as they have personalities of their own they are conceived as capable of doing things which in men would be morally contemptible, because in the Hindu conception the gods simply are not subject to the moral category. They are *jenseits von Gut und Böse*. And this non-moral character of the gods results in certain positively immoral elements in their worship. To quote from Farquhar: —

"The great temple-gateways of South India known as 'gopurams' and the temple towers of Central India are in many cases covered with sculpture of indescribable obscenity: while here and there the internal walls and ceiling are frescoed with bestiality — frescoes representing the pleasures of Vishnu's heaven. The car on which the god rides on great festival days is also frequently defiled with obscene carvings. To this day troops of dancing girls who are called 'devadasis,' servants of the god, and who now and then do take part in the ritual, but whose real occupation is prostitution, are connected with most of the great temples of the South and West and do immeasurable harm. Women scour the country and adopt or buy little girls to bring them up for this infamous life. . . . The extraordinary thing is that the obscene sculptures, the foul frescoes, the dancing-girls, and the offensive symbols are found, not in private buildings, but in the temples, the high places made holy by the presence of the gods. The inevitable conclusion is that neither Vishnu nor Shiva has ever been regarded as having such a character as would be shocked by such things." [1]

[1] *Crown of Hinduism*, p. 397. Dr. Jones, for many years connected with the Theological Seminary at Pasumali, near Madura, assures me that the practice of keeping professional dancing girls and religious pros-

The degree to which the gods are conceived as persons will, of course, vary from worshiper to worshiper; and especially among the more ignorant one will hear the gods described as distinct persons without qualification. My acquaintance in the temple at Delhi told me that Shiva was a real person, dwelling in heaven in a form much like that of his image in the temple — though he could take other forms if he chose. Vishnu, he said, was another person quite distinct from Shiva, and the two were great friends, and in fact worshiped each other. Though I gave this man every chance to say it, there was no suggestion in his conversation that these divinities were forms and aspects of each other or of the One God.

Yet if I had asked him if there were many gods or one, he would probably have answered that either statement would be true. That, at any rate, is the kind of response one usually gets in India to such a question. There are many gods — yes; but there is also but one God. We should probably understand the Hindu position better if we did not use the word "god" at all in reference to the many deities, but called them, as the Indians do, devas, or "shining ones." The many devas are as consistent with a fundamental monotheism as are the many angels of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And the educated Hindu will tell you either that the devas, Vishnu and the rest, are aspects or names for the One God, or that they are beings higher in the scale than you and I, but subject to birth and death as we are, and infinitely inferior to the Absolute One, Who is All-in-All.

The zealous Shaivites maintain that there is but one God and that He is Shiva; and that it is quite proper to worship Vishnu, since Vishnu is but a name for Shiva: while the Vaishnavites maintain the same liberal position, *mutatis mutandis*, quoting Vishnu's words in the Gita: "Even those who wor-

titutes at the temples is on the wane, and that for a number of years the great temple at Madura has had none at all — having to borrow from neighboring temples for great occasions. The obscene carving on the temples is certainly bad enough, but it is not peculiar to India. Gothic and Renaissance sculptors occasionally decorated Christian cathedrals and monastic buildings in similar fashion, — though much less profusely; as may be seen by a close examination of the carvings of Notre Dame and the Hôtel de Cluny in Paris.

ship other gods, if full of faith, in reality worship Me, though not according to ordinance." [1]

Some members of the great sects take even a more liberal position than this, and do not even insist that *their name* for the One God is the *right* name. Thus a Vishnu worshiper said to me: "The religion of Vishnu to the more enlightened means *love*. Vishnu essentially is love. And yet, after all, Vishnu is but a name or manifestation of the One God, who is the One Power of the Universe." It was noticeable that this man always referred to God, not as He, but as It. Later on, he pointed out to me a man with the Shiva marks on his forehead. "The difference between that man and me," said my Vaishnavite acquaintance, " is not that we have different gods. The difference is largely a matter of words — he calls God Shiva and singles out certain aspects as of special importance; I call It Vishnu and emphasize certain other aspects. But it is really the same God that we worship, and this One God possesses all the aspects."

Another Hindu explained the matter to me in this fashion: "As ten people observing a rose will see ten different things, each separating out that aspect of the rose which interests him most, so of God. You ask how many gods there are? There are in fact, subjectively considered, as many gods as worshipers. Each of us has his own God. But it is the One God who has these many forms. He has, in fact, an infinite number of forms because He is infinite. Each of *us* is a form of God. But some of us represent more of Him than others do — just as the white light of a lamp shines through a clean and uncolored chimney better than through a clouded one."

Here we are, indeed, on the very verge of philosophy. But Hinduism is ever on the verge of philosophy, when not in fact plunged into the very midst of it. The philosophy of Hinduism is difficult and highly abstruse; but a surprisingly large number of uncultured Hindus know at least the two great secrets with which this philosophy begins and ends: There is One Absolute Spirit, manifesting Itself in many forms; and somehow or other, you and I and the rest of us finite beings are very closely related to the Infinite One.

[1] IX, 23.

CHAPTER V

THE ONE GOD

ABOUT seven or eight hundred years before Christ there lived a boy named Sveteketu. When he was twelve years old (as the Chandogya Upanishad tells us), his father said to him: —

"'Sveteketu, go to school; for there is none belonging to our race, darling, who not having studied the Veda is, as it were, a Brahmin by birth only.'

"Having begun his apprenticeship with a teacher when he was twelve years of age, Sveteketu returned to his father when he was twenty-four, having then studied all the Vedas, conceited, considering himself well-read, and stern.

"His father said to him, 'Sveteketu, as you are so conceited, considering yourself so well-read, and so stern, my dear, have you ever asked for that instruction by which we hear what cannot be heard, by which we perceive what cannot be perceived, by which we know what cannot be known?'

"The son said: 'Surely those venerable men, my teachers, did not know that. For if they had known it, why should they not have told me? Do you, sir, therefore, tell me that.'

"'Be it so,' said the father. 'If some one were to strike at the root of this large tree, it would bleed but live. If he were to strike at its stem, it would bleed but live. If he were to strike at its top, it would bleed but live. Pervaded by the living Self, that tree stands firm, drinking in its nourishment and rejoicing. But if the living Self leaves one of its branches, that branch withers; if it leaves a second, that branch withers; if it leaves a third, that branch withers. If it leaves the whole tree, the whole tree withers. In exactly the same manner, my son, know this.' Thus he spake: 'This body, indeed, withers and dies when the Self has left it; the living Self dies not. That which is the subtile essence, in it all that exists

has its self. It is the True. It is the Self. And, oh, Sveteketu, that art thou.'" [1]

The books which Sveteketu had studied in his twelve years schooling were chiefly the hymns or verses of the Veda, and some long treatises on the sacrifice known as Brahmanas. These various books — the oldest writings of the Aryan race — had taught him that there were many gods of many names, — gods of sun and sky, of storm and fire, and gods of abstract powers and indefinite functions. The stories about these gods and the worship of them had been elaborated and systematized, and centuries of speculation had added their learned weight of exegesis and explanation; so that for even a bright boy like Sveteketu twelve years of hard study were required to master it all. But about Sveteketu's time a new conception had dawned upon some of the thinkers of India; a conception which was destined to be the heart of Indian philosophy and the inspiration of Indian religion throughout all subsequent centuries. This new idea was the conception of a Single Power back of the many powers, a Divine Essence back of the many divinities, which should be, not an addition to the already overflowing pantheon, but the inner Self of all things, by virtue of which gods, men, and the material world are what they are, and in which all things live and move and have their being. And this subtile essence of all things — here was the great secret — this Universal Self which blooms in every flower and breathes through every storm, is identical with the self of each one of us. "Now that light which shines above this heaven, higher than all, higher than everything, in the highest world, beyond which there are no other worlds, that is the same light which is within man." [2]

"It fills me with great joy and a high hope for the future of humanity," writes Tagore, "when I realize that there was a time in the remote past when our poet-prophets stood under the lavish sunshine of an Indian sky and greeted the world with the glad recognition of kindred. It was not seeing man

[1] Chand. Up. VI, I and II. — In quoting from the Upanishads I have made use of Max Müller's version in the *Sacred Books of the East* (vol. I. of the American Edition; New York, Christian Lit. Co., 1897), and Professor Deussen's *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda* (Leipzig, Brockhaus, 1905).

[2] Chand. Up. III, 13, 7.

reflected everywhere in grotesquely exaggerated images, and witnessing the human drama acted on a gigantic scale in nature's arena of flitting lights and shadows. On the contrary, it meant crossing the limiting barriers of the individual, to become more than man, to become one with the All. It was not a mere play of the imagination, but it was the liberation of consciousness from all the mystifications and exaggerations of the self. These ancient seers felt in the serene depth of their mind that the same energy which vibrates and passes into the endless forms of the world manifests itself in our inner being as consciousness; and there is no break in unity. For these seers there was no gap in their luminous vision of perfection." [1]

Again and again in the Upanishads is this great thought reiterated. "This Universe is Brahman. The intelligent whose body is spirit, whose form is light, whose thoughts are true, from whom all works, all desires, all sweet odours and tastes proceed; he who embraces all this, who never speaks and is never surprised, he is myself within the heart, smaller than a corn of rice, smaller than a canary seed or the kernel of a canary seed. He also is myself within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than the heaven, greater than all these worlds. The all-worker, the all-desirer, the all-embracer, he is myself within the heart, he is that Brahman. He who has this faith has no doubt. Thus spake Shandilya, Shandilya." [2]

Brahman, then, as the Upanishads name the Supreme Absolute, is the true inner being of all things. Yet It is not a *collection*, not the sum total of all things, but the inner unity which appears in all these varying forms. Its unity is of the most absolute sort, excluding in Its inmost Self all variety, though manifesting Itself in many ways. "There is one ruler, the Self, within all things, who makes the one form manifold. The wise who perceive Him within their self, to them belongs eternal happiness, not to others. There is one eternal thinker thinking non-eternal thoughts who, though One, fulfills the desires of many." [3]

[1] Sadhana (London, Macmillan, 1913), pp. 20–21.
[2] Chand. Up. III, 14. [3] Katha Up. II, 5, 12–13.

Brahman is in one sense the Creator of the World, but not after the fashion of Jehovah. He — or *It*, one hardly knows which pronoun to use — He is both its efficient cause and its material cause. All things come from Brahman as their source. They come from Him, we say, yet they do not come away from Him. For Brahman is eternally immanent in them all just as the clay from which a thousand pots were made is ever present in them. Yet this figure must not be pressed too hard; for Brahman is not to be taken as merely identical with the world. There is a vast difference between identifying God with the world and identifying the world with God. The Upanishads do the latter: they interpret the material world in divine terms. Pantheism in the stricter sense of the word does the former: it interprets the Divine in material terms, making God merely the sum of all things that are — no matter what they are — or perhaps only another name for the totality of laws. Of this sort of pantheism there is none, or next to none, in the Upanishads. Brahman is immanent in the world, yes; He is in one sense identical with the world, yes; but in such a sense that the world must be ultimately interpreted by means of Him, that is to say in spiritual rather than in materialistic terms. We know the world through knowing God, not *vice versa*. And so far is Brahman from being lost in the world that the world is very nearly lost in Him. From the time of the Upanishads on, the essential worthlessness of the world is one of the fundamentals of Indian religious thought.

If in the Upanishads the world is ever on the verge of being lost in Brahman, the human soul is far from escaping that danger. The doctrine of the unity of the soul with God, if carried to its logical conclusion, would seem to leave but little individuality and independence to the finite member of the partnership. The soul would seem, in the words of a Christian mystic, to be "drowned in the boundless Sea." [1] And yet he who objects to being altogether lost in the Absolute and desires enough distinction between himself and the Divine to permit of his saying, "I am I," will find many a passage in the Upanishads, particularly in the later ones, for his comfort.

[1] Tauler. See Preger's *Deutsche Mystik* (Leipzig, Doerffling and Franke, 1893), vol. III, p. 219.

For the Upanishads, like the Bible, are not troubled with consistency and logic. Their aim is not to expound a system of philosophy, but to give poetic expression to religious intuitions.

Yet one must add at once that the Upanishads are full of genuinely philosophical insight. They were the result of real philosophical discussion and logical thought; only the conclusions to which the various thinkers came were not fully carried out and not fully correlated with each other. But these ancient philosophers saw clearly that such an Absolute as they had conceived must necessarily be in most ways unknowable. Knowledge of the Scriptures, knowledge of this world, — scientific and historical knowledge as we should say, — all this is a hindrance rather than a help in knowing God. And the reason for this is plainly seen by the writers of the Upanishads — namely the fact that since Brahman is conceived as the Universal Subject, He can, by his very nature, never be an object of knowledge. This unknowability of Brahman is exactly on a par with the unknowability of the human self — in fact, it is the same thing, since the two selves are one. As the eye cannot see itself, so the self, whether human or divine, being eternally a subject and a subject only, can never make itself into an object. It is not a *thing* — like tables and chairs and scientific propositions. The self is *sui generis* and is simply not in the category of things that are to be investigated, tabulated, and described. And doubly impossible must it be to know the Universal Self who is identical with all that is, so that in all the universe there is no *other*, no being that is not He. This is the profound reason — so the ancient seers of India would assure us — that we cannot by searching find out God or know the Almighty unto perfection. "For when there is as it were duality, then one sees the other, one hears the other, one perceives the other, one knows the other; but when the Self only is all this, how should he see another, how should he hear another, how should he perceive another, how should he know another? How should he know Him by whom he knows all this? That self is to be described by No, No! He is incomprehensible, for He cannot be comprehended; He is imperishable, for He cannot perish; unfettered, He does not

suffer, He does not fail. How, O beloved, should one know the Knower?" [1]

"He who dwells in the darkness and within the darkness, whom the darkness does not know, whose body the darkness is, and who rules the darkness within, he is thy Self, the ruler within, the immortal.

"He who dwells in the light and within the light, whom the light does not know, whose body the light is, and who rules the light within, he is thy Self, the ruler within, the immortal.

"He who dwells in all beings and within all beings, whom all beings do not know, whose body all beings are and who rules all beings within, he is thy Self, the ruler within, the immortal. Unseen but seeing, unheard but hearing, unperceived but perceiving, unknown but knowing. There is no other seer but He, there is no other hearer but He, there is no other perceiver but He, there is no other knower but He. This is thy Self, the ruler within, the immortal. Everything else is of evil."[2]

The Upanishads are the ultimate source of nearly all Indian religious philosophy. They are not widely read to-day, nor have they been for years; and yet their influence is greater than that of any other book ever written in India. They struck the keynote for all subsequent Indian thought, and their influence upon religious and thoughtful souls, including millions who have never read them, has always been considerable. It is from the Upanishads that the whole long line of Indian religious poets, from the writer of the Bhagavad Gita to Rabindranath Tagore, have drawn the greater part of their inspiration. And most of the founders of new religious movements owe their ideas directly or indirectly to the Upanishads. The directness with which the Upanishads speak to the Indian heart is finely illustrated in the "Autobiography" of Devendranath Tagore (the father of the poet). He had long been seeking inner peace in vain when one day a page of the Isa Upanishad blew past him. He seized it and with the help of a pundit made it out. He had never read any of the Upanishads before, and the effect of this one page was the transformation of his whole life and the new-directing of all his energies. The message from the ancient book came to him as

[1] Brihadaranyaka Up. IV, 5, 15. [2] *Ibid.*, III, 7, 13–15, and 23.

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a divine answer specially sent for his salvation. "I had been eager to receive a sympathetic response from men; now a divine voice had descended from heaven to respond in my heart of hearts, and my longing was satisfied. I got just what I wanted. I had never heard my most intimate thoughts expressed like this anywhere else. The very mercy of God Himself descended into my heart, therefore I understood the deep significance of the words. Oh, what words were those that struck my ears! 'Enjoy that which He has given unto thee.' What is it that He has given? He has given Himself. Enjoy that untold treasure, leave everything else and enjoy that supreme treasure. Cleave unto Him alone and give up all else. This tells me what I have long desired. It was not the dictum of my own poor intellect, it was the word of God Himself. Glory be to that Rishi in whose heart this truth was first revealed. Oh, what a blessed day that was for me, — a day of heavenly happiness!" [1]

The Upanishads, like the Bible, as I have said, are essentially religious rather than systematically philosophical. But just as the Prophets and Apostles were followed by the theologians, so the Rishis were followed by the *acharyas* and the pundits. The creation of the Vedanta philosophy was as inevitable as that of Christian theology. Since the Upanishads contained the inspired truth, it was necessary to make out exactly what they meant; hence many centuries of exegesis, culminating in the Vedanta Sutras and finally in the Commentaries of Shankara, Ramanuja, and other great scholars. Of the interpretations which these commentators give us, the most influential among Indian philosophers is the "Advaita Vedanta," or absolute monism. This philosophy was given its final form by Shankara, who, though he lived about 800 A.D., is the absolute ruler of what may be called the dominant philosophy in India — or at least of northern India — even to-day. Hence

[1] *Autobiography* (Calcutta, Lahiri, 1909), pp. 15–16. Many an Indian could say of the Upanishads what Coleridge said of the Bible: it "*finds me.*" But the appeal of the Upanishads is not confined to India. Every reader of Emerson will remember the joy that these ancient writings brought to him; and Schopenhauer's words have often been quoted: "In the whole world there is no study so refined and so elevating as that of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life. It will be the solace of my death."

in studying him we are studying contemporary Indian thought. I have no intention of giving even an outline of his great system of philosophy, but there are a few points in it which should be touched upon.

Shankara's Vedanta makes explicit an implication which one would naturally gather from the earlier Upanishads, namely, the impersonal nature of Brahman. In the Upanishads this is not made explicit, and in fact the later Upanishads sometimes speak of Him in quite theistic terms. But for Shankara and his stricter followers of to-day Brahman, though spiritual, — a conscious subject, — is not personal. Hence modern Vedantists most often refer to Brahman as *It* rather than as *Him*. Brahman is the spiritual unity back of all phenomena.

To quote from the official "Textbook of Hindu Religion," written for the use of the classes in the Central Hindu College: "This Unity, which never appears but which is, is implied in the very existence of universes and systems and worlds and individuals. It is not only recognized in all religion, but also in all philosophy and in all science as a fundamental *necessity*. Endless disputes and controversies have arisen about It, but none has denied It. Many names have been used to describe It and It has been left unnamed; but all rest upon It. It has been called the All and the Nothing, the Fullness and the Void, Absolute Motion and Absolute Rest, the Real, the Essence. All are true yet none is fully true. And ever the words of the Sages remain as best conclusion: 'Not this, not this.' " [1]

I once asked a Hindu philosopher of my acquaintance the question whether Brahman were personal or impersonal. His answer may be of interest to the reader. "Are you," he asked, "personal or impersonal? Personal surely," he continued; "yet when you say *we*, as 'we men' or 'we thinkers,' does the word *we* mean merely a collection of separate selves? Or is there something in common between those selves that unites them? This uniting, this common element, is not personal. And this impersonal element, no less than the personal element, must, of course, be in each of us. So it is with Brahman.

[1] *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics* (2d ed., Benares, Central Hindu College, 1904), p. 40.

Brahman is both personal and impersonal. Aristotle has shown that every material thing is both concrete and abstract; and in the same way Brahman is both concrete and abstract, both personal and impersonal. This point of view must govern our answer to every question about Him. Monism, pluralism, theism, deism, pantheism, each has its truth, yet none is the whole truth. Is the sun's ray red, orange, yellow, green, blue, or violet? It is not any, because it is all."

Yet it must not be forgotten that this "One without a second" is regarded by the Vedanta as essentially spiritual. This in fact follows for the Vedantist from the very conception of Brahman as genuinely real. For the follower of Shankara is in the last analysis an idealist, and all reality is for him ultimately to be expressed in terms of consciousness. "The Scripture teaches," writes Shankara, "that the Brahman without attributes is pure spirituality and free from everything which is distinct from it; for it says: 'As a lump of salt has no inside and no outside, but consists of salt taste through and through, so has This Self no distinguishable inner or outer, but consists through and through of knowledge.' This means," continues Shankara, "that this Self is through and through nothing but spirit: the spiritual is its entire nature, as the salt taste is that of the lump of salt." [1]

An Absolute that includes within itself all that is must obviously be neither good nor bad in the moral sense, but simply *jenseits von Gut und Böse.* The moral category does not apply to It. This Shankara and his followers explicitly recognize and even insist upon. Emerson represented the orthodox Indian view very justly when he put into the mouth of "Brahm" the words —

> "Far and forgot to me are near,
> Shadow and sunlight are the same."

And Brahman is not only non-moral. He is also altogether actionless. This characteristic is for the orthodox Vedantist one of His chief distinctions. Unlike the many gods, Brahman seeks nothing, wishes nothing, needs nothing, does nothing, — nothing, that is, except to be, and His being involves "all

[1] Quoted by Deussen in *Das System des Vedanta* (Leipzig, Brockhaus, 1906), p. 229.

this." Hence, being actionless, Brahman is for the Vedantist not an object of worship, but only a necessary philosophic conception — with, it must be added, a certain emotional glow. In strict logic, therefore, it may be said that the consistent Vedantist should not pray. So far, at any rate, as his religion is connected with Brahman he will make no petitions; for that aspect of him which is one with Brahman is out of time and quite careless of change and chance. He should, however, and usually does, repeat the *gayatri* [1] every day, but regards it not as a prayer, but as a form of meditation on the ultimate truth of philosophy.

As a matter of fact, most Vedantists do pray and worship; but their worship is directed either toward the limited and personal "Brahma with qualities," whom Shankara and his predecessors recognized as a manifestation of the unlimited Brahman; or toward one of the many *devas* — especially Shiva or Vishnu — whom all Vedantists accept quite seriously as partial expressions of the Divine and as having the same sort of quasi-reality that you and I have. "Shiva and Vishnu are real personal beings," said a Hindu philosopher to me, "and just as they are infinitely inferior to Brahman, so they may be said to be on a plane infinitely superior to ours. They are personal in the same way that we are personal, and impersonal in the same way we are impersonal — though probably somewhat less personal than we, somewhat less separate, more impersonal, more universal, more inclusive." In the last analysis, of course, they, like ourselves, are really one with Brahman; and all separateness in them as in us is an illusion.

All separateness is illusion; and this illusion is the explanation of this material world, which, though seemingly *many*, is in reality identical with the "One without a second." The Upanishads had asserted this identity, but had not tried to solve the problem resulting. Shankara seriously tried, and his reasoning seems to have been in general something like this: If Brahman alone is real, and if Brahman is an absolute Unity, a pure perceiving subject, then the world as we see it must be unreal. It must be merely a vision, so to say, which Brahman creates, a shadow which Brahman casts. It is due to Brah-

[1] See p. 137.

man's Maya, His "creative faculty"; it is, in fact, a kind of "wraith" [1] of Brahman. The world, then, is Maya, a word which, though it originally referred to Brahman's creative power, has come in Shankara's philosophy to mean Illusion, or, in more modern terms, Appearance. The phenomenal world is unreal in much the same sense that the World of Appearance in Bradley's famous book is unreal. In fact the Advaita Vedanta resembles Bradley's system, and even Royce's, and the whole neo-Hegelian *Weltanschauung* in many important respects, being frankly an idealistic monism. But its closest spiritual relative in the West is the philosophy of Fichte. Thus my Vedantist friend in Benares said to me: "Matter exists only as the expression or idea of spirit. The Vedanta is Berkeleyan in principle, except that it makes matter, not the experience of many individual spirits, but of the Universal Spirit. Thus we may say that Spirit creates or evolves or imagines matter. As an independent entity matter simply does not exist. The universal Ego posits the not-I, but does so only in turn to deny it." This, it must be confessed, is a rather Western and Fichtean mode of expressing the Vedantist view of matter. Shankara and the conservative pundits use somewhat different language, — which, however, comes to the same thing. The world, say they, is due to *Avidya*, to *ignorance* — to our ignorance, but also and primarily to a kind of universal and cosmic ignorance. There are, teach Shankara and his followers, three kinds of reality: "absolute," "conventional" or "practical," and "imaginary." The first of these is Brahman alone; the second is this material world, Time and Space, and our separate selves; the third consists of such things as we all recognize as illusions, as when one takes a rope for a snake or a piece of tin for a coin. Now, teaches Shankara, the second kind of reality so-called is really quite as illusory and imaginary as the third; both are due to the same general kind of causes and both may be corrected in the same way. Why is it that we take the rope for the snake and the tin for the coin? It is because of our *fears* and *desires*, because of the interests of our separate selves. We

[1] Cf. Barnett's Introduction to his translation of the Bhagavad Gita, p. 39.

allow these things to captivate our attention and obstruct our vision. And our acceptance of "conventional" reality, of this world of the many, as genuinely real is due to the same causes. And as the rope ceases to look like a snake when we know it is a rope and put away our thought of self-interest and its consequent fear; so would this world of manifold separate things vanish away if we could fully vanquish our ignorance and our desires, and nothing be left but the Unlimited Brahman without qualities, the Universal Subject with no object, Pure Consciousness.

But whence the ignorance that hides from our eyes this vision? Whence this delusion of a separate self with separate interests in a world of things and actions, if in truth there be no separate selves, no action, no things, and no world? Your Vedantist will sometimes answer, "It is due to Maya." But what, then, is the source of Maya? Some will respond, "It is Brahman's will." But Brahman, then, has a will? "No, that would give It qualities and make It act." Is Maya, then, a second reality in addition to Brahman? "No! No! There is only One without a second." What, then, is Maya? "It is," said one monk to me, "a part of Brahman." Brahman, then, has parts? "No! No! This Maya is not real. It must be conceived as coming from our ignorance." But why are we — we who are really identical with Brahman — so ignorant? "Alas, we are too ignorant to answer that question. Our ignorance is due to Maya." And this is where we started! [1]

The monistic Vedanta of Shankara is, as I have said, the dominant philosophy of India, or at least of northern India, to-day. As such it has great importance. Yet its importance is easily exaggerated and has often been overestimated. It is the philosophy of certain philosophers and pundits; but there are many thinkers who accept other forms of religious phi-

[1] I appealed to my friend the philosopher for further light on this point. He said: "The consciousness of the One Spirit consists in recognizing the illusion of the phenomenal world which it posits. With it positing and negating are one simultaneous and timeless act. The One and the Many, the Unchanging and the Changeful, are thus reconciled. It is expressed by the logion 'I-this-not' — in other words the not-I is posited only to be at the same time opposed and negated." But why does the One thus posit and deny at all? To this my friend had no answer.

losophy, and many intelligent and deeply religious men who reach back past all systems to the religious intuitions of the Upanishads themselves. It is not the technicalities of Shankara's philosophy, nor its insistence that the world is unreal which has given it its great influence in India, but rather its defense of the religious doctrine that God is immanent in all things and dwells in our hearts. "Some modern philosophers of Europe," writes Tagore, "maintain that the Brahman of India is a mere abstraction, a negation of all that is in the world, — in a word, that the Infinite Being is to be found nowhere except in metaphysics. It may be that such a doctrine has been and still is prevalent with a section of our countrymen. But this is certainly not in accord with the prevailing spirit of the Indian mind. Instead, it is the practice of realizing and affirming the presence of the Infinite in all things which has been its constant inspiration." [1]

The Vedanta philosophy, as distinct from the commentaries upon it, whether written by Shankara or any one else, is always said to be based on three great books or sets of books — namely, (1) the Upanishads, (2) the Vedanta Sutras, (3) the Bhagavad Gita. As the third of these is by no means in agreement with the two others, commentators upon the Vedanta have always had to make a choice between these books, take their fundamental point of view from one of them, and then "interpret" the rest of the canon in the light of their chosen scripture. Shankara was guided chiefly by the Upanishads and the Sutras. Ramanuja, the other great commentator, who lived about two hundred years later, chose the Gita as his guide and interpreted the other books in the light of it. The Bhagavad Gita grew out of the cult of Vasudeva-Krishna-Vishnu. The sect who worshiped in a special sense this deity, together with the Shaivites or worshipers of Shiva, had during the centuries just preceding our era developed a new sort of religious experience, known as *bhakti* or devotion. Perhaps I should not call this new, for even in the Rig Veda there are hymns [2] which speak at least the beginnings of a personal relationship between worshiper and God; and yet as the really vital and absorbing thing in religion this relation of love and

[1] Sadhana, p. 16.

[2] For example, 1, 25.

devotion to a personal God was, in the early days of the great Sects, a new experience. Meanwhile, however, the Vedanta philosophy, with its One Infinite Brahman, was spreading among the intelligent classes. And by the beginning of our era the problem for many an earnest worshiper of Vishnu and of Shiva seems to have been cruel and pressing: How accept the teachings of philosophy and yet maintain the belief in my beloved Lord, whose bhakti forms all the real religion that I have? [1]

The solution to this problem was found about the beginning of our era for both sects, by means of the identification of the god of each sect with the Infinite Brahman. For the Vaishnavas this view that the personal god of the sect is in reality the Absolute Deity finds its best expression in the Bhagavad Gita, the most widely read and universally loved book in all Sanskrit literature. It is, as Howells says, "a living book, devoutly read and studied by tens of thousands of Hindus throughout the length and breadth of India. All men of light and leading in India are thoroughly familiar with its contents, and no man of culture, whether that culture be native or foreign, and whether he lives in village, town, or city, neglects the study of it." [2]

The Gita presents us with a view of God different from any we have studied.[3] For we find here neither polytheism nor idealistic monism, but unquestionable theism. There is really one God only; but this one God is not an impersonal essence, nor a universal perceiving subject. He is a personal Being whom His worshipers may love, and who in turn loves them. But this personal God is by no means a transcendent Deity,

[1] This dilemma is well presented by Farquhar, *Crown of Hinduism*, p. 366.

[2] *Op cit.*, p. 427.

[3] According to Professor Garbe, the Gita falls into two distinct parts, an older theistic Gita, written in the first half of the second century B.C. and expressing the views of the religion of Vasudeva-Krishna-Vishnu; and, secondly, various additional verses of the pantheistic sort, inserted after Vishnu had come to be identified with Brahman. Professor Bhandarkar rejects this division, pointing out that the Indian view is always that of an immanent God even when this God is conceived as personal. The question whether the Gita was written originally in its present form or is a composite as Professor Garbe believes, does not, however, concern us here; for it is the Gita as it stands to-day that we are considering.

standing apart from nature like the God of the English deists or the Jehovah of the Old Testament. He is, on the contrary, as immanent in the entire universe as the Brahman of the Vedanta Himself. The material world is recognized as perfectly real, but it is only the form or the body of the Supreme Spirit, who moves it and dwells within it as the World Soul or as the Logos of Greek philosophy. And the souls of men are also parts of the Supreme Spirit, although retaining through eternity their partial individuality. Thus we may say that God has three aspects: as the supreme, unmanifested One, and as the two manifestations of matter and of spirit. Or we may describe the Divine Nature as dual rather than triune, namely as unmanifested and as manifested. "A nature have I of eight orders," says Sri Krishna in the Gita, "Water, Fire, Wind, Ether, Mind, Understanding, and Thought of an I, — this is the lower. But know that I have another and higher Nature than this, one of Elemental Soul, and thereby is upheld this universe. Learn that from these twain are sprung all born beings; the source of the whole universe and its dissolution am I. There is naught higher than I; all this universe is strung upon Me as gems upon a thread. I am taste in water; I am light in moon and sun. The pure scent of earth am I and the light in fire. The life of all born beings am I."[1]

In the Vishnu Purana it is written: "As gold is still one substance howsoever diversified as bracelets, tiaras, or ear-rings, so Hari [Vishnu] is one and the same, although modified in the form of gods, animals, and men. As the drops of water, raised by the wind from the earth, sink into the earth again when the wind subsides, so the various gods, men, and animals which have been detached by the agitation of the qualities, are reunited when that disturbance ceases with the Eternal."[2]

For the devout Shaivite Shiva takes the same position of supreme yet all-inclusive personal God that Vishnu has for the Vaishnavite. He is commonly represented as dancing; and this is a symbol of a philosophical conception. For the entire cosmic process is his deed, and all his acts are but eternal sport. Says a Tamil verse: "Our Lord is a dancer who, like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses his power in mind and matter, and makes

[1] VII, 4–8. [2] III, 7.

them dance in their turn." For his philosophical followers Shiva is sometimes the manifestation of Brahman; sometimes He has taken the place of Brahman. Though a personal and theistic God He is immanent in the world, and though different from us He is the eternal Lover of our souls. A Tamil poet of the Eleventh Century sings to Him: —

"O Splendour dawning within my soul as I sink in swooning desire,
Whose lotus-feet ruddily deck the crowns of the chief of the heavenly choir,
Who art all-spread Ether, Earth, Water, Air, Fire, — who art these yet other than they —
Whose shape in their shape is hidden — O joy to have seen Thy vision to-day!

"The darkness to-day Thou dravest away, didst dawn in my heart as the sun.
In thought beyond thought my spirit hath sought Thy being: save Thee there is none.
Thou art One, art the Energy stirred for aye, self-subliming to endless degree;
Thou art other than ought: save Thee there is naught — O who may have knowledge of Thee?

"Thou gavest Thyself and me didst take; wert Thou the more cunning or I?
I got of Thee bliss everlasting, O Thou whose home is in Perun-durai;
From me what hast Thou won my Sovereign? for Thou hast made of my spirit Thy fane,
And hast set Thine abode in my body to-day — all mine the unrecompensed gain!" [1]

There have been disputes and rivalries between the different philosophical sects of India; but as compared with the wranglings between Christian churches these Indian disputes are as nothing at all. For not only the learned, but many also of the ignorant, in India, know that the different names for Deity are but names, after all, and they are content that the One God should have an infinity of titles. Says the Vishnu Purana, "He who offers sacrifices, sacrifices to Vishnu: he who murmurs prayers, prays to Him; he who injures living creatures, injures Him; for Hari is all beings." [2] In this belief in a common God and a common worship, no matter what names be used, unite nearly all intelligent Vaishnavites, Shaivites, Shaktas, and Vedantists. Ramakrishna spoke for the

[1] From Barnett's *The Heart of India*, p. 84. [2] III, 8.

spiritually minded Hindu of all sects and all ages when he said to his disciples: "People dispute among themselves, saying: 'God is personal, with form. He cannot be impersonal and formless,' — like the Vaishnavas who find fault with those who worship the Impersonal Brahman. When realization comes, then all these questions are settled. He who has seen God can tell exactly what He is like. As Kabir said: 'God with form is my Mother, God without form is my Father. Whom shall I blame, whom shall I praise? The balance is even.' He is with form, yet He is formless. He is personal, yet He is impersonal; and who can say what other aspects He may have!" [1]

The many aspects of the Supreme have never made India lose what to it is the fundamental truth of religion and philosophy, that though God is exalted and dwelleth on high, He is not far from any one of us. This is the great message of India's seers, poets, and prophets through the ages. It is a striking fact, this unanimity of the representatives of an entire people, during twenty-five hundred years, in expressing the *Testimonium Animæ*. I have already shown by quotations of some length from the Upanishads and the Gita the earlier voicings of this experience. The message is not one of hoary antiquity alone, but has been handed on from seer to seer to our own day. Ramanuja and Ramanand carried the light of the Gita through many centuries, Kabir, the Weaver of Benares and the disciple of Ramanand, voiced it in many forms: —

"Turning away from the world I have forgotten both caste and lineage;
My weaving is now in the infinite Silence.
My heart being pure, I have seen the Lord:
Kabir having searched and searched himself hath found God within him."

"God cannot be obtained even by offering one's weight in gold;
But I have purchased Him with my soul.
Brahma, however much he talketh, hath not found God's limit;
But by my devotion God came to me as I sate at home." [2]

"O man," writes Nanak, a younger contemporary of Kabir who had learned from him,

[1] *The Gospel of Ramakrishna* (New York, Vedanta Society, 1907), p. 28.
[2] From Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion* (Oxford, Froude, 1909), vol. II, pp. 260 and 152.

"O man, entertain such love for God as the lotus hath for the water. Such love doth it bear it that it bloometh even when dashed down by the waves." [1]

The intensity of the bhakta's longing for God is nowhere better shown than in the poems — one might say the prayers — of another spiritual successor of Ramanand, the sixteenth-century poet Tulsi Das. "Lord, look thou upon me!" he exclaims, "naught can I do of myself. Whither can I go? To whom but Thee can I tell my sorrows? Oft have I turned my face from Thee and grasped the things of this world; but Thou art the fountain of mercy; turn not Thou thy face from me. . . . Lord, Thy ways ever give joy unto my heart. Tulsi is thine alone; and O God of mercy, do unto him as seemeth good unto Thee." [2]

Kabir was as much Mohammedan as Hindu, Nanak was the founder of the Sikhs, Tulsi Das, like Ramanuja and Ramanand, was a Vaishnavite; and in the Shaivite school we find the same feeling of mystery and deep joy at the visit of God to the soul. "The Light that was in the beginning and hath no beginning," writes Tayumanavar, the Tamil devotee of Shiva, in the early eighteenth century; "the Light which shineth in me as Bliss and Thought, appeared as the Silent One. He spake to me, sister, words not to be spoken.

"The words that were spoken, how shall I tell? Cunningly he seated me all alone, with nothing before me. He made me happy, beloved, he grasped me and clung to me.

"He bade me put all other clingings aside and cling to Him within. What I got as I clung to him, how shall I tell? He spake of things never spoken, beloved.

"'Think not of Me as other than thou.' When He uttered this one word, how can I tell the bliss that grew from that Word?

"The field where grew the bliss of Shiva, that pure space I drew near. Weeding out the weeds of darkness, I then looked. Save the Lord's splendor, I saw naught, sister.

"The blessed Light of Bliss that struck me by His grace made me, who am less than an atom, into perfect fullness

[1] *The Sikh Religion*, vol. I, p. 270.
[2] Grierson in the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. II, p. 420.

without motion hither or thither. Lo, the strangeness of it, sister!" [1]

Barriers of faith do not bar this insight. The hymn-writer of the theistic Brahmo Samaj,[2] which in the middle of the nineteenth century still carried onward the Upanishad tradition, could sing: —

"O Thou incomparable Light of lights; the sun, moon, planets and stars are devoid of luster before Thee.

"As a single sun, with myriads of rays, lights up the whole world, so Thy love, scattered in a thousand ways, wells up in the pure love of woman, and lives in the maternal heart.

"The high peak that pierces the clouds, or the deep blue sea, whithersoever we go, Thou art there. The bright effulgence of the sun is a ray from Thee, and Thy shining is in the moon, and Thy mild loveliness in the clouds; whether in crowded cities or in the lonely forest, wherever we roam, Thou art there."

And in our own day the poet who perhaps better than any other voices the spirit of India, puts afresh the same ever recurring testimony: —

"The day was when I did not keep myself in readiness for thee; and entering my heart unbidden even as one of the common crowd, unknown to me, my King, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment of my life.

"And today, when by chance I light upon them and see thy signature, I find that they have lain scattered in the dust mixed with the memory of joys and sorrows of my trivial days forgotten.

"Thou didst not turn from my childish play among dust, and the steps that I heard in my playroom are the same that are echoing from star to star." [3]

[1] Quoted by Barnett in *The Heart of India*, pp. 85 and 87.

[2] Satyendranath Tagore, an older brother of the well-known poet. The hymn here quoted is taken from Shivanath Shastri's *History of the Brahma Samaj* (Calcutta, Chatterji, 1911), vol. I, p. 120.

[3] Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (Macmillan, 1913), p. 35.

CHAPTER VI

DUTY AND DESTINY

THE central point of Hindu thought is the soul. It is from the soul or self that all the reasoning of the Hindu starts and to it that all his arguments finally return. The Hindus are *sure* of the soul. There is nothing else that they are so sure of. As to the material world, they are not very certain of it. Certainty begins with the "knowing self." This is the doctrine which the West believes officially. It is good for professors of philosophy to teach, good for their students to remember on examination, good for the clergy to preach on Sundays, good for the rest of us to assent to and refer to occasionally — very occasionally — in conversation. But in India people *really believe* it. They believe it every day in the week. They act upon it and plan out their lives in reference to it. It is to them a practical as well as a theoretical reality.

The soul means to the Indian "the knowing self." The strict follower of the monistic Vedanta (and of the Samkhya philosophy as well) strips this inner kernel of our being of every quality till it becomes a pure perceiving subject like "the Brahman without qualities" — with whom, in fact, it is identical. The follower of Ramanuja leaves it more individuality, though making it ultimately one (in some sense or other) with the personal God. And the non-philosophic Hindu is not troubled with the refinements of the question, but still does a deal of thinking concerning the soul and its eternal destiny.

The knowing self, then, is the innermost kernel of a man; but the self as we know it empirically in ourselves and others contains also many relatively temporary characteristics, which, though not eternal like the inmost self, may travel with it through many births and characterize it through many lives. This view the Hindus express in the doctrine of the many "sheaths" or "bodies" surrounding the soul. There is, of course, the outer sheath, the physical body which we all see,

and which the soul quits at death. But besides this there are several other sheaths, of increasing inwardness, some of which we lose in the next world, while some still abide through long series of lives. But the inner kernel, the real self of a man, is never stripped off, is never put away. It is one of the eternal elements of the universe, a spark of the One Eternal Element; for, as we have seen, for both Vedantist and bhakta, it is in some sense or other a part of the Divine, or even identical with God Himself.

This unity of the soul with God is at the foundation not only of Hindu metaphysics, but of Hindu ethics as well. The great aim of life is the full realization of that God-consciousness, the significance of which forms the central point of Hindu thought. Before this can be fully attained, the soul must be liberated from the mass of particular interests and petty wishes and self-born illusions which weigh it down and hide from it the beatific vision. Hence *liberation* and *realization* may be called the twin ideals of Hinduism, and it is these that determine all its ethical theory.

The first step toward the realization of this ideal is, of course, to be found in ordinary negative morality. Hence we find in the sacred books of the Hindus, and in their social customs and popular ideals, certain conventional views of virtue and vice which have been common among most civilized peoples from the Egyptians down. These are "sanctioned," in India as elsewhere, by the usual paraphernalia of delightful heavens and terrible hells. The Garuda Purana (a kind of Hindu Dante) has a list of sinners who may expect punishment in the next world, which shows that the Hindu conscience is far from insensible; for it includes (among many others) "slayers of Brahmins, drinkers of intoxicants, slayers of cows, infanticides, murderers of women, destroyers of the embryo, and those who commit secret sins; those who steal the wealth of the teacher, the property of the temple or of the twice-born, or the possessions of women or children; those who do not pay their debts, who misappropriate deposits or betray confidence, or who kill with poisonous food; those who seize upon faults and depreciate merits, who are jealous of the good; those who despise places of pilgrimage and disparage the scriptures; those who

are elated at seeing the miserable and who try to make the happy wretched," [1] etc. It is only fair to add that one of the sins for which Hinduism has no tolerance is that of intoxication; and the teachings of the Hindu religion on this subject have very solid and splendid results. Du Bois, whose book may almost be described as one long tirade against Hindu immorality and superstition, cannot help writing as follows: "As a rule a respectable Hindu will not touch spirits or intoxicating drink, considering that they cause one of the greatest internal defilements that it is possible to contract. In consequence of this praiseworthy opinion drunkenness is looked upon as a degrading and infamous vice, and any one would be promptly and ignominiously expelled from his caste were he found guilty of giving way to it. It is only Pariahs and men of the lowest classes who dare publicly to consume intoxicating drinks. One does occasionally see in European settlements and in the large towns high-caste natives, and even Brahmins, breaking the law of temperance; but it is only in strict privacy and after every precaution has been taken to conceal the unpardonable weakness." [2]

As one might expect, the popular casuistry of Hinduism includes a certain amount of externalism, such as one finds in the moral codes of most ethnic religions. The following confession of the wicked soul, taken from the Garuda Purana, may remind the reader somewhat of the Egyptian's "Negative Confession" before Osiris,[3] and will show the external nature of much popular Indian morality. "I made no offerings to fire, performed no penances, did not worship the deities, did not honor the assemblies of Brahmins, did not visit the holy river, never performed benevolent acts. Alas, I did not excavate any tanks in waterless places, did not even a little for the support of cows and Brahmins." [4]

The externalism which is taught in much popular and "Puranic" morality is one of the weakest points of Hinduism, and with the less intelligent portion of the population can hardly

[1] IV, 5–12.

[2] *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies* (3d ed., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1906), pp. 187–88.

[3] See *The Book of the Dead*, chap. 125.

[4] II, 35–37.

fail to have a decidedly evil influence. What, for instance, shall we expect of a religion when in some of its most popular scriptures we can read such assertions as these: —

"There is no doubt that by the installation of a Shiva lingam a man acquires ten million times the merit which is acquired by making happy the poor and such as are enfeebled by disease." [1]

"The betrayer of friends, the ungrateful, he who lies with his teacher's wife, the slayer of a Brahmin, all these are absolved by the dedication of a bull." [2]

It is probably in the popular Hindu views about sacred streams and sacred places that this externalism most often meets us and seems most strikingly absurd and immoral. Bathing in the Ganges at certain appointed times [3] is, as we have seen, regarded by many Hindus as a great aid in ridding one of sin and in acquiring merit; and this belief of the ignorant Hindu is taught him directly by his priest, who makes a very good living out of it. There is also a very general belief — taught in the Puranas and accepted by many intelligent and educated Hindus — that to die in Benares and have one's ashes thrown into the Ganges is of considerable assistance in getting to heaven. That this is really believed by many cultivated Hindus, including rich people and Maharajas, is shown by the fact that so many of them come to Benares to die.

"When the wind which has touched the waves of the Ganges touches the dead," says the Garuda Purana, "his sin is at once destroyed. There was a certain hunter, a destroyer of all sorts of creatures [and therefore, in the Hindu conception, a very wicked man] who went to the place called hell. When his bones were [accidentally] dropped into the Ganges by a crow, he ascended the divine chariot and went to the abode of the Shining Ones." [4]

[1] Mahanirvana Tantra, XIV, 6–7. [2] Garuda Purana, XII, 52.

[3] It is not the *daily* bath in the Ganges that washes away sin; nor is it believed that one can commit a sin to-day and wash it away to-morrow. It is only the ritualistic bath at certain times and seasons and with certain prayers, etc., that frees one of sin. The daily bath is merely a religious duty: one bathes because brought up to bathe and because cleanliness is a very large part of godliness; not in order to get rid of sin.

[4] X, 83, 85, 86. Is this belief in the efficacy of a dip in Ganges water different in principle from the Christian belief in the efficacy of infant baptism?

One would expect that the belief in the efficacy of bathing in certain places would result in an increase of vice and crime; and that therefore Benares in particular would be a very wicked city. I could not, however, discover that this was the case. Though I made inquiries on the subject I found no one who maintained that Benares was wickeder than other cities. In spite of which, there can be no doubt that externalism of the sort we have been considering must inevitably have some effect in weakening the moral struggle and cheapening the moral life.

Of course the more intelligent and spiritual Hindus deplore the externalism of their ignorant fellows as deeply as any one, and regard it as no more a part of true Hinduism than the veneration of ikons is, in the opinion of a Protestant, a part of true Christianity. And yet many acts and abstinences, which to the European seem purely external matters, are accepted even by the intelligent Hindu as a constituent part of the moral life. These are all traditional, of course; but the Hindu thinker regards them as thoroughly rational none the less and as belonging very properly to the field of morality. And our difference of opinion on these particular points is due to a more fundamental difference of opinion on the larger question of the point of view from which the moral life should be regarded. In a general way it may be said that the Christian considers the moral life a matter of voluntary activity, while the Hindu regards it as a matter of habitual conduct. The one emphasizes *choice;* the other, *training*. Of course, it would be quite mistaken to affirm that the Christian never thinks of training and habitual conduct, or the Hindu of choice and voluntary activity; but it is true that the Christian and the Hindu *emphases* lie in different places. What interests the Hindu chiefly is the acquisition of self-control; and this in his opinion is best to be attained by means of an unremitting psycho-physical training beginning with the cradle and ending with the deathbed. This training descends into the minutest details of life, as well as determining life's plan as a whole, and hence includes many

Is it not baptism in both cases, the one before death and before the attainment of reason, the other after? In both cases it seems to be the holy water that does the business.

things which to us seem purely "external." Of course they are external; but in the Hindu's opinion the external may often influence the internal. "The injunctions and prohibitions of Hinduism in regard to the utmost outer concerns of man's life," writes one Hindu philosopher, "have a very salutary effect upon his character by helping to strengthen the inhibitive powers of the will, as well as by training the individual to perpetually give preference in his daily work and recreations to the good over the pleasant. . . . You will thus see that in the socio-religious life of the Hindu there is a much narrower range for the indulgence of the senses and the appetites than there is, perhaps, in any other system. The Hindu has to submit to much greater restraints even in what are regarded as quite legitimate enjoyments everywhere, than the votaries of the other great world-religions. . . . It is by these means that the general socio-religious scheme of the Hindus helps materially to advance the real ethical life of the people. It is to these that we owe all the real humility of our national character. Our proverbial patience and mildness; our admitted respect for all life, both human and non-human; our special spiritual aptitudes, and our general freedom from some of the most obtrusive vices of civilized humanity; all these are largely due to these socio-religious institutions and physico-ethical disciplines associated with them which are so often dismissed by the modern man both in Europe and even in India, as mere superstitions." [1]

The aim of this psycho-physical training is the achievement of perfect self-control, the mastery of the spirit over the flesh, and the destruction of particular and selfish interests and desires. For it must never be forgotten that the goal toward which Hindu ethics points, and in the light of which everything else must be valued, is *liberation* and *realization*. And nothing so hinders the realization of the Universal Self as the hot desires and the petty interests of the particular self. Hence the one great virtue of India is *selflessness*. Of course the rank and file never get far enough on the moral pathway to aim at this virtue directly; but they recognize its charm and they reverence it supremely wherever they find it. Neither rich man nor

[1] Bipin Chandra Pal in *The Soul of India*, pp. 248, 252, 254.

Rajah arouses in their hearts such genuine admiration as does the sannyasi who has renounced the world and given up every selfish interest in complete resignation to the divine will. Nor is there any other virtue which the best of their sacred books and the best of their spiritual teachers so repeatedly emphasize. "Hateless toward all born beings," says Sri Krishna in the Gita, "friendly and pitiful, void of a thought of a *mine* and an *I*, bearing indifferently pain and pleasure, patient, ever content, the Man of the Rule subdued of spirit and steadfast of purpose, who has his mind and understanding fixed on Me and worships Me, is dear to Me." [1]

Almost synonymous with *selflessness* is *indifference*, which has been so exalted by all the religions native to India. "One indifferent to foe and to friend, indifferent in honor and in dishonor, in heat and in cold, in joy and in pain, free of attachment, who holds in equal account blame and praise, silent, content with whatsoever befall, homeless, firm of judgment, possessed of devotion, is a man dear to Me." [2] Evil and foolish men, on the other hand, are those who are ever thinking: "This desire to-day have *I* won; this will *I* attain; this wealth is *mine*, this likewise shall afterward be *mine*. This foe have *I* slain; others likewise shall *I* slay. *I* am sovran, *I* am in enjoyment; *I* am successful, strong, happy; *I* am wealthy, noble; what other man is like to me? *I* will make offerings and give alms; *I* shall rejoice." "Turned to the thought of *I*, to force, pride, desire, and wrath, they jealously bear hate against Me in their own and in other bodies." [3]

Forget yourself! Give up yourself! Root out every selfish impulse and desire. This is the ever-repeated message of India. "Live in the world like a dead leaf," says Ramakrishna. "As a dead leaf is carried by the wind into a house or on the roadside and has no choice of its own, so let the wind of the Divine Will blow you wherever it chooses. Now it has placed you in the world, be contented. Again, when it will carry you to a better place, be equally resigned. The Lord has kept you in the world, what can you do? Resign everything to Him, even your own dear self; then all trouble will be over. You will see

[1] Bhagavad Gita, XII, 13 and 14.
[2] *Ibid.*, XII, 18, 19.
[3] *Ibid.*, XVI, 13–15, 18.

then that He is doing everything: everywhere is the will of God." [1]

It is not without significance that this sincere and earnest desire for unselfishness — a desire manifest not only in the various divisions of Hinduism but in nearly all the religions native to India — should be so often self-defeating. From the attempt to regard *unselfishness* as itself a goal, there results, in most minds, an almost irresistible tendency to consider this mental state a means of acquiring merit; and so the self is often denied in order that the self may be glorified. Psychologically this is due, I suppose, to the innate difficulty of making a negative quantity the object of desire. Whether this is ever really possible or not, certain it is that real unselfishness of a permanent and reliable type is very much more easily attainable by aiming at a positive goal, especially by seeking actively to forward some great cause, the individual self being thus lost in the not-self — or in the larger self.

Hindu teaching (until the last few years, at any rate) has never felt satisfied with the unselfishness which is to be found in active social service, and so has deprived itself of the greatest aid to true devotion. The best substitute it has for this is the bhakta's intense love of God, and the philosopher's doctrine of the identity of the soul with Brahman. Hinduism teaches that the desires and interests of the separate self, of the *apparent* self as one might call it, must be suppressed in order that the true self may be liberated, and its unity with the Universal and Divine may be realized. The more positive aspect of this effort is the persistent attempt to realize God in everything and in every one. And he who succeeds in doing this will find a universal love and sympathy springing up in his heart, and will have a reason very literally for loving his neighbor as himself, because in the last analysis he and his neighbor are one in God. Says the Mahabharata: —

> "This is the sum of all true righteousness —
> Treat others as thou wouldst thyself be treated.
> Do nothing to thy neighbor which hereafter
> Thou wouldst not have thy neighbor do to thee.
> In causing pleasure or in giving pain,

[1] *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*, pp. 89–90.

In doing good or injury to others,
In granting or refusing a request,
A man obtains a proper rule of action
By looking on his neighbor as himself." [1]

"We shall see as we study morality," says the "Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics," "that all its precepts are founded on the recognition of the unity of the Self. If there is only one Self, any act by which I injure my neighbor *must* injure me." It is related of Baba Arjundas, a much-revered Hindu saint who died only a few years ago, that at the Allahabad Mela of 1895 he was found by an acquaintance weeping and calling out that a policemen had been beating him. Such an outrage was unthinkable in India, but the old gentleman was asked to point out the policeman who had committed the cowardly sacrilege. At last he did so, but, seeming to come back to himself, he added: "It was not *this* me that he beat, but *another* me." [2] The truly moral Hindu should have become so selfless as to be almost unable to distinguish between himself and other selves. And this sympathy of his should be literally boundless, extending far even beyond humanity and including within its loving embrace every form of sentient life. For the animals too are souls, and every soul is ultimately a spark of the Divine Fire.

This view of the identity of the self with God weakens, to a considerable degree, the belief in personal responsibility and the sense of it. Here is another aspect of the contrast already pointed out between Hindu and Christian ethics. The Christian moralist lays his emphasis upon the responsibility of every soul in all his choices. The Hindu is seeking chiefly to cultivate certain habitual reactions, points of view, and emotional moods, and gives comparatively little attention to responsibility and choice. In fact, if he be a follower of Shankara's monistic Vedanta, he will admit frankly that he has no such thing as choice and that free will is only an illusion. The bhaktas or members of the great sects, on the other hand, may and often do believe in freedom. The Bhagavad Gita throughout pre-

[1] XIII, 5571, translated by Monier Williams, *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, pp. 547–48.
[2] *The Soul of India*, p. 47.

supposes the reality of free choice. Ramanuja's systematization of the Vedanta, to be sure, makes the human soul a part of God in such a way that it is God, not man, who makes the choice and does whatever is done. But after Ramanuja's death, his followers divided on this question of free will, the southern party denying it while the northerners affirmed it.[1]

The Vedantist and the bhakta differ not only on the question of free will, but also on the kind of salvation that they desire. Both seek "realization," but the relation to God, the kind of union or communion with God, which they strive for, is not quite the same for both. "The follower of the monistic Vedanta," says Ramakrishna, "who seeks to realize the Absolute Brahman discriminates, saying: 'Not this, not this.' That is, the Absolute is not this, not that, nor any finite object, not the individual soul [as such], not the external world [for this is Maya, Illusion]. When as a result of this kind of reasoning the heart ceases to be moved by desires, when, in fact, the mind is merged in superconsciousness, then Brahman-knowledge is reached. One who has truly attained to this Brahman-knowledge realizes that Brahman, the Absolute, alone is real and the world is unreal, and that all names and forms are like dreams. The dualist devotees and lovers of the Personal God, — the bhaktas, — on the contrary, say that the external world is the glory of the Lord. The heavens, stars, moon, mountains, ocean, men, birds, and beasts, all these He has created. He manifests His glory by these. He is both within and without. He dwells in our hearts. A bhakta wishes to enjoy communion with his Lord and not to become identical with Him. His desire is not to become sugar, but to taste of sugar. He says, 'O Lord, Thou art the Master, I am Thy servant. Thou art my Mother and I am Thy child. Thou art the Whole, I am Thy part.' He does not wish to say, 'I am Brahman.'" [2]

The pathways to these contrasted goals, of course, also differ. The Vedantist takes the way of inaction and knowledge, the bhakta the way of devotion. It has been a tradition — almost

[1] Rather picturesquely the two schools are known respectively as the "cat school" and the "monkey school": for the kitten is quite passive and has to be carried by its mother, while the little monkey actively clings to its mother with its arms about her neck.

[2] *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*, pp. 146–48.

a truism — with the conservative school of Indian thinkers for twenty-five hundred years that every sort of action, no matter what its moral quality, inevitably accumulates karma, and therefore hinders and delays the liberation of the soul. Hence the ideal method for him who is in earnest in the great business of life is to retire from all active occupations, refrain from every kind of work, and give up his whole time to meditation and the acquisition of "Brahman-knowledge." The bhaktas with whom the ideas originated that get their classic expression in the Gita, while admitting that the way of inaction and knowledge if carefully followed would lead to salvation, pointed out a simpler and a better way. It is, they said, not work itself and as such which binds one down to this world, but the spirit in which the work is done. The whole question is thus psychological; and the struggle is removed altogether to the inner sphere. The thing that binds the soul in slavery to the flesh and to this evil world is the *worldly state of mind.* Hence it is perfectly possible to do all one's duties as a member of society and still avoid the accumulation of new karma, *provided* one's aim in so doing be altogether selfless. "Do thine ordained work: for work is more excellent than no-work." "In Works be thine office: in their fruits must it never be. Be not moved by the fruits of Works: but let not attachment to worklessness dwell in thee. Abiding under the Rule and casting off attachment, so do thy work, indifferent alike whether thou gain or gain not." [1]

If we add to this inner state of selflessness the more positive injunction of faith in the personal God and warm love and devotion to Him and to His incarnations, we shall understand the way of salvation which has been preached and practiced by the Indian bhaktas from the beginning of our era down to our own days. And as the reader will see, there is considerable similarity between this and the Christian view. This similarity is gladly recognized by many Indians. Enthusiastic followers of Ramanuja sincerely say to the missionary: "We are *one* at heart. The oneness of God, the spirituality of God, salvation by the grace of God and by His grace alone, God taking human form to save our souls, salvation as deliverance from the bond-

[1] Bhagavad Gita, III, 8; II, 47, 48.

age of sin and selfishness — all these points are common to both parties." [1]

In spite of these resemblances, however, there are also differences between the Christian and the Hindu points of view quite as fundamental. One concerns the metaphysical question of the relation of the soul to God: for though Ramanuja leaves the soul some degree of individuality, it has the same relation to God that our bodies have to our souls. But a more important and practical difference is to be found in the moral ideals of the two religions. For the Indian ideal, as we have seen, is almost altogether a subjective one. The Hindu's gaze has been so concentrated on the realization of his own union with God that he has almost never had any time to think seriously of bringing about a Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The idea that the end of action could be found in social values, that "the Kingdom of God is in your midst," is a conception which has seldom presented itself to his mind except to be rejected and scorned. As a result of this preëminently subjective point of view in Indian ethics, strenuous activity for a great charitable or social cause has almost always been looked at rather askance even by the finest and most truly sympathetic of Hindu saints. There have been exceptions, but the exceptions were very un-Indian in type. Ramakrishna, who was certainly one of the finest examples of Hindu spirituality of whom we know anything, said to Keshub Chunder Sen, "You talk glibly of doing good to the world. Who are you to do good to the world? First practice devotional exercises and realize God. Attain to Him. If He graciously gives you His powers, then you can help others, and not till then. . . . Say when you pray: 'Lord, grant that my work in the world and for the world may grow less and less day by day, for I see that my work growing manifold only makes me lose sight of Thee.' . . . A man desired to see the shrine of the Divine Mother. On his way he stopped and spent all the day in distributing alms to the poor. When he went to the shrine, the door was closed and he could not see the Holy of Holies. The wise ones should first see the Holy Mother, and seeing Her they may then turn their attention to almsgiving and other good works if they so desire. All good works are for

[1] Mr. Froelich in the *Indian Interpreter* for July, 1912.

the realization of God. Works are the means, and God-vision is the end." [1]

"God-vision is the end." And what is it? Ah, that is something which may be experienced, but which in its fullness can never be described. In fact, he who once plunges into the depths of the Infinite Ocean of the Divine never comes back to describe what he has seen. "Sukadeva and other great spiritual teachers stood on the shore of that Infinite Ocean, saw it and touched its waters. Some believe that even those great souls did not go into the Ocean, for whoever enters into that Ocean of Brahman does not return to this mundane existence. A doll made of salt once went to the ocean to measure its depth. It had a desire to tell others how deep the ocean was. Alas! its desire was never satisfied. No sooner had it plunged into the ocean than it melted away and became one with the ocean. Who could bring the news regarding the depth of the sea? Such also is the condition of the soul who enters into the Infinite Ocean of the Absolute Brahman." [2]

Yet it is possible to stand by the side of the Endless Sea, touch and taste its waters and hear its thunder and return home again with some faint words descriptive of what one has seen. So one may gain a vision of the Divine and still live on in the world of men. "Cry to God with a yearning heart," says Ramakrishna, "and then you will see Him. The rosy light of dawn comes before the rising sun: likewise a longing and yearning heart is the sign of God-vision that comes after."

The realization of God's presence in one's heart has been the unfading and unchanging ideal of India these twenty-five hundred years and it is to-day. That exclusive longing for it has shut from the Hindu's view various social values and practi-

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 170–72. A learned and enthusiastic Brahmin whom I met on a train preached me an impromptu and rather beautiful sermon on the way of salvation. Among other things he said: "The chief obstacles in the way of freedom are self-interest, the impulse to destroy others, and conceit. Of these conceit is perhaps the most insidious. It often takes the form of our thinking ourselves able to help others — hence as being superior to others. This we must root out. We should never seek to do good to others for the others' sake, but only for our own sakes, as a step in our own salvation; for to seek to do them good for their own sakes [objectively] would involve conceit on our part."

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

cal altruistic aims we have already seen. Aside from this, its negative aspect, how we shall evaluate this supreme ideal of India will depend for each of us on his attitude toward mysticism in general. To the purely practical man this "realization of the Divine" will, no doubt, be a stumbling-block, and to the materialistic scientist it will be but foolishness; while to them who believe in a transcendent yet immanent spiritual world, it will be as the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. Doubtless it is easy and often natural for us to say to the sannyasi on the banks of the Ganges that his "realization" is mere fancy and self-delusion, and nothing, nothing more. He has been told that many times. But ever he and with him the whole army of mystics respond, as Faust to Mephistopheles: —

"In deinem Nichts hoff' ich das All zu finden."

So much for the Indian ideal and the means for its achievement; so much for the soul's duty. What of its destiny? "If a man die, shall he live again?" This very human cry in the face of the Great Mystery has resounded through India as through all other lands these thousands of years. Perhaps seven centuries before Christ it was phrased in the Upanishads in a form strikingly like that in which it was repeated a little later by the writer of the Book of Job in distant Israel. "Like a mighty tree in the forest, so in truth is man. But while a tree, when felled, grows up again more young from the root, from what root, tell me, does a mortal grow up, after he has been felled by death?" [1]

Another of the Upanishads tells us that when little Nachiketas went to the House of Death, the Terrible One was pleased with the boy and told him to ask three boons, promising to grant them whatever they might be. The boy's first and second requests do not here concern us, but in the third he said: —

"There is that doubt, when a man is dead, — some saying he is; others he is not. This I should like to know, taught by thee; this is the third of my boons."

Death said: "Choose another boon, O Nachiketas, do not press me; let me off that boon. Choose sons and grandsons, who shall live a hundred years, herds of cattle, elephants, gold,

[1] Brihad. Up., III, 9, 28.

horses. Choose the wide abode of the earth and live thyself as many harvests as thou desirest. If you can think of any boon equal to that, choose wealth and long life. Be king, Nachiketas, on the wide earth; but do not ask me about dying."

Nachiketas said: "These things last till to-morrow, O Death. Even the whole of life is short. Keep thou thy horses, keep dance and song for thyself. No man can be made happy by wealth. Shall we possess wealth when we see Thee? Only that boon which I have chosen is to be chosen by me. That on which there is this doubt, O Death, tell us what there is in the great Hereafter. Nachiketas does not choose another boon but that which enters into the hidden world."

So at last Death answered: "The knowing Self is not born; it dies not: it sprang from nothing, nothing sprang from it. The ancient is unborn, eternal, everlasting: he is not killed though the body is killed. If the slayer think that he slays, or if the slain think he is slain, they do not understand, for this one does not slay nor is that one slain. The Self, smaller than small, greater than great, is hidden in the heart of that creature. A man who is free from desires and free from grief sees the majesty of the Self by the grace of the great Creator. The wise who knows the Self as bodiless within the bodies, as unchanging among changing things, as great and omnipresent, does not grieve." [1]

This message which Death gave to little Nachiketas over twenty-five hundred years ago has never been forgotten in India. Never forgotten and I might almost add never doubted. "The knowing Self is not born; it dies not." There can be no question that the belief in immortality is very much stronger and very much more prevalent in India than it is in Europe or America. Almost every one accepts it, takes it as a matter of course and plans his life in reference to it. Can we say the same of Christendom? Ask the man you meet on the street or in the train. He will be likely to tell you that *this* is the life he is sure about and interested in; and he will probably add, "I'm taking a chance on the next life." In India they are taking no chances on the next life: it is this one rather that seems to them uncertain.

[1] Katha Up., I, 1 and 2.

One reason for this greater faith of India is probably to be found in the absence of Western education and the doubts which it sows. But it is also due in part, I believe, to the different views of the nature of the soul and the nature of its immortality held by Christianity and by Hinduism. In Christian teaching the life of the soul has a natural beginning and a supernatural prolongation. The natural thing would be for the soul to die with the body, with which it began; this I think is the general feeling, fine-spun arguments to the contrary notwithstanding. The survival of bodily death by the soul is always more or less of a miracle and needs supernatural explanation. If it were not for Christ, or at least for God, we as Christians should hardly hope for immortality. Many of us can with difficulty conceive how an atheist could believe in the future life.

Modern Western psychology increases this tendency by its teaching of the dependence of the mind on the nervous system and by its view of the "soul" as equivalent merely to the "stream of consciousness." Thus the belief in the survival of bodily death is made to seem increasingly unnatural and demands more than ever some supernatural support. And at the same time with this scientific development, the old supernatural supports are being noticeably and rapidly weakened. The result is the open denial of human immortality on the part of a considerable number of earnest thinkers and by an even larger number of persons who wish to be considered thinkers: while a very large proportion of the rest of us feel so uncertain if not downright skeptical on the subject that we avoid discussion of it and side-track so far as possible all reference to it. We are "taking a chance on the next life," and find it hardly good form to talk much about it.

This is not the case in India. There, as I have said, practically every one believes in immortality. They live in the light of it. Paraphrasing Browning's lines, they might almost say: —

> "Leave *now* for dogs, apes, and Europeans;
> We have forever."

There are atheistic philosophers in India, but these maintain the deathlessness of the soul as confidently and enthusiasti-

cally as do the theists and Vedantists. For in India the belief in the soul's immortality is based not upon God nor upon any supernatural interference or influence, but on the very nature of the soul itself. Its survival of the death of the body is in no way miraculous, for it did not begin with the body nor is it dependent upon the body. It is not a "stream of consciousness," a "bundle or collection of different perceptions," as Hume called it. It is a knowing subject, a real and potential character. Existence is part of its nature. It will never cease to be because it never began to be. If you admit a beginning for it, you give up the whole argument. What *begins* must in the course of nature *end* — as the Buddha pointed out long ago. But "the knowing Self is not born; it dies not. It sprang from nothing; nothing sprang from it." "Never have I not been," says Sri Krishna to Arjun; "never hast thou not been, and never shall time yet come when we shall not all be. Of what is not there cannot be being; of what is there cannot be ought but being." [1]

It would seem that the conception of the soul as the "knowing Self," together with a belief in its eternity backward as well as forward, its *essential* eternity, were necessary to make the belief in immortality natural and independent of any God or any supernatural influence or assistance. But such a conception, of course, involves some hypothesis as to the story of the soul through its long preëxistence and the goal that it seeks in its long future. A cosmic conception that will do this and at the same time take up into itself all the empirical facts of this present life, will inevitably make a strong appeal to many minds. And, as the reader knows, the Indian conception of Transmigration does just this.

Everybody in the West knows about transmigration, and almost everybody takes it as a joke. It means (so most people will tell you) that when we die, we're going to be reborn as pigs or insects; just as people will still assure you that evolution "means" that our ancestors were monkeys. Now, it is doubtless true that the theory of evolution does trace our ancestry back to the apes; but to identify this great cosmic view with a particular statement as to certain of your ancestors and

[1] Bhagavad Gita, II, 12 and 16.

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mine argues a complete failure to grasp the real significance of the fundamental hypothesis of modern biology. And in like manner, the doctrine of transmigration does teach that men who have prostrated their moral sense and their reason and have sinned against the light in this life will be given in their next birth a body more suitable to their nature than the human form divine; but to take this particular assertion as the essential part of a cosmic scheme that seeks to include all destiny from everlasting to everlasting, is, to say the least, a token of surprising ignorance or else a very poor joke.

To put it in a word, transmigration means *education*. It is an attempt to view the whole cosmic process in the light of the soul's purification and progress. It is based upon the profoundly ethical postulate that in the moral sphere no less than in the physical, whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. Every meanest act produces its inevitable result in future character and future fate. The cosmos takes account of moral deserts, so that the deed and the deed's requital are one and the same act. Reward and punishment are thus not something external to the act, imposed from without upon the actor by an external judge: they are the inevitable fruit of the act itself, and in very truth a part of it. Man's fate is not imposed upon him by a stern or gracious Ruler of the universe: in the words of an ancient Greek philosopher, "man's character is his destiny."

The Hindu calls the great law that a man inevitably reaps what he sows, the Law of Karma. He also uses the word karma to mean the merits and demerits which one acquires by his good and evil acts. When a man dies he has a certain amount of karma which he carries with him and which must somehow be worked off. Part of this is got rid of, so to speak, in the intermediary state which Hindu doctrine places between successive lives on earth. The details of this doctrine are complex and need not detain us here. They involve the conception of the various "sheaths" of the soul already referred to. Some of these stay with one through "Pretaloka," a kind of purgatory to which man goes after death, and where after purging away some of his evil karma he puts off one more of his sheaths. "Pitriloka" is his next place of abode, and from

there he goes to "Svarga," where he dwells in happiness and "changes the good thoughts and desires of his past life on earth into definite mental moods or capacities [just as he has done in this world, only that in Svarga it is done much more effectively]. When the thought impulses started during life are finally exhausted, he returns to another incarnation on this earth. His mental and emotional capacities are reborn with him in the next birth, forming what is called character." [1] And not only the man's character but his external condition in his new incarnation is determined by his old karma. Thus, not only in the intermediate states but in the new earthly life he is still working out the old karma; and while doing so he is, of course, acquiring new karma. So that, as some one has said, karma is like a clock that winds itself up by the very process of running down.

There is, however, a way of release from this wheel of rebirth, — namely, the means toward "liberation" and "realization" studied in the first part of this chapter. The world is like a great school. In each class we stay till we have learned our lesson. Those who do not learn must return the next year, so to speak, and take the course over again. Some, in fact, who do very badly are even sent back to a lower class. But those who earnestly try are promoted from class to class. And at last comes graduation day. By means of self-mastery and selflessness, by knowledge or devotion, we may finally be freed from all karma and enter into the perfect realization of the Divine which is the goal of all our souls and all our striving. For though Hinduism cannot say with St. Augustine that God has made us for Himself, — inasmuch as we were not *made* at all, but are eternally parts or offshoots of the Supreme, — it can and does insist that our souls are restless till they rest in Him.

As to what is the exact nature of this final consummation of our long wanderings there is some difference of opinion among the Indian schools. The bhaktas regard it as a personal immortality in blissful communion with the personal God. An old monk in a Vaishnavite monastery at Benares told me that he expected to go at death directly to Rama's heaven and there to remain, in the presence of the One God, for all eternity.

[1] Govinda Das, *Hinduism and India* (Benares, 1908), pp. 72–73.

"Whatever be thy work," says Sri Krishna to Arjun, "thy sacrifice, thy gift, thy mortification, make thou of it an offering to Me. Thus shalt thou be released from the bonds of Works, fair or foul of fruit: thy spirit inspired by casting-off of Works and following my Rule, thou shalt be delivered and come unto Me. They that worship me with devotion dwell in Me and I in them. None who is devoted to me is lost. Have thy mind on Me, thy devotion toward Me, thy sacrifice to Me. Thus guiding thyself, given over to Me, so to Me shalt thou come." [1]

For the Vedantist the final goal is Moksha,[2] the losing of one's self in the Divine, the complete identification of the human self with the Universal Self. Toward the close of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we are given an account of the fate of the "man who desires," — i.e., of the man who still has some karma to work out, who has not yet attained to liberation and realization. The text then continues: "So much for the man who desires. But as for the man who does not desire, who not desiring, freed from desires, desires the Self only, his vital spirits at death do not depart elsewhere. Being Brahman he goes to Brahman. When all desires which once entered his heart are undone, then does the mortal become immortal, then he obtains Brahman. And as the slough of a snake lies on an ant-hill, dead and cast away, thus lies this body; but that disembodied, immortal spirit is Brahman only, is only light." [3]

Such, then, is the Hindu doctrine of Destiny. The Indians almost unanimously consider it by far the most satisfactory solution of the problems of life and of the universe that the human mind has ever conceived. They insist, among other things, that it alone solves the problem of evil. The inequalities of this life, its seemingly strange distribution of pains and pleasures, are made consistent with the perfect justice of the universe by the assumption that a man's fortune in this life is an exact index of his merit in the last. As to this particular

[1] Bhagavad Gita, IX, 27, 28, 29, 31, 34.

[2] As a matter of fact very few expect to attain to Moksha at the conclusion of this life. A Hindu friend of mine told me he had met but two men who looked for it so soon. Most instead look forward to a blissful svarga and a good rebirth.

[3] IV, 4, 6–7.

claim it must be pointed out that its cogency will depend upon the further question as to how the merit in the former life was determined. If, as Shankara's Vedanta maintains, it was due in its turn to previous karma, genuinely free choice nowhere having anything to do with it, then we shall find it impossible to admit that the transmigration theory has any advantage over other theories as a solution of the problem of evil. This criticism, however, cannot be brought against those schools of Hindu thought which maintain the freedom of the will. The working of the theory in practical life, on the other hand, has (as we shall see) certain very great disadvantages, resulting often in self-righteousness on the part of the high-born, undue servility among the lower castes, and strange lack of sympathy toward the unfortunate.

Yet the great moral significance of the theory must not be overlooked. We commonly say that it is the Semites who have developed the moral side of religion, and that the Indians have paid but scant attention to it. And in one sense this is true. Jehovah and Allah are moral Gods in a sense that Brahman and all his devas certainly are not. But it must be pointed out that the Semitic universe is moral because Jehovah or Allah forces it to be; while the Indian universe is moral in and of itself. The Indian atheist believes both in the immortality of the soul and in the morality of the universe; the atheist of Hebrew, Christian, or Mohammedan extraction believes in neither. The Law of Karma is independent of the Gods, and whoever believes in it believes that the laws of morality are more fundamental than those of physics, that the moral struggle is so fierce as to occupy thousands of incarnations, and so important that it is the central fact of the whole cosmic drama. A theory such as this, and one with such a venerable history behind it, numbering as it does among its adherents not only Shankara and the Buddha, but Empedokles and Plato and a host of other thinkers, deserves at least to be taken seriously.

The great criticism to be brought against the reincarnation theory is that it can produce scarcely a shred of empirical evidence. But as this holds equally well of all doctrines of the future life, it will not help us in determining the relative merit of any. An objection which will appeal to many is to be found

in the considerable loss that would seem to result if those who, after the training of a lifetime of study, suffering, and endeavor, go to their graves full of years and of wisdom, are to be reborn shortly thereafter as ignorant and helpless infants. It seems, indeed, a pity that the spiritual gains of a long and strenuous life should go for so little and that so much of the struggle should have to be repeated. A more serious objection is of a technical and philosophical nature, and has to do with the question of personal identity. What do you mean, one may well ask the defender of this theory, when you say that the *same self* is reborn in another body? If we follow Ribot, whose analysis has been accepted by most psychologists, self-identity from a psychological point of view *means* to us (pragmatically) similar bodily feelings and sensations plus conscious memory.[1] If the "soul" be reborn in a perfectly new body and bereft of all its memories, it is hard to see what can be the pragmatic meaning of calling it "the same" soul. If, now, our Indian friend appeals from psychology to metaphysics, and claims identity only for an *immaterial substance*, it will not be hard to show him, with the aid of John Locke, that personal identity and identity of "substance" are two very different things,[2] and that the only identity any one has ever had a vital interest in is the identity of the person. If it is only an "immaterial substance" or a characterless pure perceiving subject that is reborn, in what sense can it be called identical with the "substance," "subject," or "soul" of the man who died?

To this the Hindu will answer that while particular conscious memories are not reborn in the new incarnation, what may be called general and potential memories are. And these are by far the most important: for they have become crystallized into emotional moods, tendencies to reaction, ways of thinking — in short, into character and temperament. The one great purpose, moreover, of moral redemption is carried over without break from one life to the other. And in addition to this *similarity of content*, there is a *continuity* between the two lives contributed by the *knowing subject*, in whose consciousness there

[1] See, for example, Ribot's *Les Maladies de la Mémoire* (Paris, Alcan, 1901), pp. 83–86.

[2] See Locke's *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, book II, chap. 27.

is no real break. Thus the two successive lives are joined by both continuity of view and similarity of content; and if these be not enough to permit us to speak of self-identity in the two incarnations, then, the Hindu will assure us, it would be difficult to see how we could affirm it within one life, or ever say that the old man who dies is the *same self* that was born "a puling infant" nearly a century before.

Whatever we may think of these arguments and of the doctrine of transmigration when viewed by itself alone, it may be of interest to compare it directly with the Protestant Christian doctrine that the soul at death passes immediately into heaven or hell and remains there eternally. The most noticeable fact about the Christian doctrine of hell at the present time is that belief in it is rapidly disappearing. The Universalists have millions of converts in denominations that bear other names. For a very large number of Christian people, who are in other respects quite orthodox, hell has become a kind of *joke.* The chief reason for this is, I suppose, the rather common feeling that a just God (to say nothing of a merciful one) could not mete out eternal punishment for the sins of a paltry threescore years and ten; and that a sensible God could not allow so short a time to count for everything in determining a man's fate, and successive endless centuries to count for absolutely nothing. This, at any rate, is certainly one of the factors that have contributed to make the Christian doctrine of hell seem irrational and almost unthinkable to the modern man. The doctrine of incarnation, on the other hand, avoids at least this difficulty. It provides inevitable and suitable punishment for every sinful act and wish, in the very fruit of the wish and of the act itself; but it provides only finite punishments for finite sins, and it makes the soul answerable for all its acts including those of its endless future. Even to the worst of beings the door of opportunity is never quite shut, if he really wills to turn from his evil way and live; nowhere in its universe is there a portal over which is written: "Who enter here leave hope behind."

But perhaps we still believe in the Christian hell. If so how many of our acquaintances do we honestly think ought to go there? A quarter of them? — I trust not. A fifth? A tenth? Very well. What about the nine tenths who are left? Are they

fit for heaven? Are they ready for the beatific vision? And if they all go there, what will heaven be like? Look around you at the people you see; think over the people you know. They are not bad people. But what kind of a place will heaven be if they — if most of us — are ready for it? Will it be worth going to; will it be endurable for all eternity? If one may judge by watching the people whom one sees, the sort of heaven that most of them would vote for would be, not, indeed, the luxurious gardens of the Koran, but perhaps a Biergarten, or a vaudeville, or the "movies." How many of them would care for the beatific vision? How many of us are ready for heaven?

It may be said in reply that at death we become so transformed in desire and character as to be made fit at once for the presence of God. But surely a transformation of such a nature and extent and brought about so suddenly would make the assertion of personal identity almost meaningless: we should be faced at least with as great a difficulty as that which I urged above against transmigration. And more serious than this difficulty is the consideration that the idea of such a moral transformation wrought miraculously by the external and accidental fact of death completely belittles the moral struggle, ignores the nature of moral life, and makes spiritual progress not a matter of inner achievement, but one of external accretion imposed from without. The Hindu thinker would smile at such a doctrine.

The truth is, we Westerners are in too much of a hurry for our heaven to be willing to wait for a good one. We must have it right off at the end of this life. Our business ideals of promptness, speed, and hustle have affected our theology. To wait more than threescore years and ten is to us intolerable. We can hardly even conceive of the great patience of the East which is willing to wait through a thousand lives — through a hundred thousand lives — and which can afford to do so because its faith in the soul and its eternal hope is so infinitely strong.

Personally I do not believe in transmigration. But I am open to conviction. And I feel very strongly the nobility and beauty of the doctrine. There is an undeniable dignity in the Hindu conception of the soul, pursuing its long pilgrimage through dying bodies and decaying worlds, until at last it reaches home

in the Endless Sea. And not only has the doctrine its own nobility: it lends a dignity and a sense of cosmic significance to Indian life. Fear and pettiness can hardly stand before this intuition. Calmness and peace tend to take their place, and a certain poise that makes one ready for all that comes. "Subdued in spirit and steadfast in purpose" — such is the Indian ideal — ready for life and ready for death. For the Hindu does not believe he is going to enter into eternal life; he believes he is living the eternal life already. He is in a condition of spiritual equilibrium, like a buoyant body on the wave or a sea-gull in the air. The body is transitory, for it is merely "this patched-together hiding-place," and the "body-dweller," the eternal soul, the knowing Self, has passed through many and many a form like this before. "As a man lays aside outworn garments and takes others that are new, so the body-dweller puts away outworn bodies and goes to others that are new."

"Weapons cleave not This, fire burns not This, waters wet not This, wind dries it not.
"Not to be cleft is This, not to be burned; everlasting is This, firm, motionless, ancient of days.
"Unshown is this called, unalterable: therefore knowing it thus, thou dost not well to grieve." [1]

[1] Bhagavad Gita, II, 22–25.

CHAPTER VII

THE HINDU DHARMA

IT is to be hoped that the reader will not suppose that by learning the Hindu views of the Gods, Philosophy, and Fate, he has learned "the Hindu religion." To us Christians it has become so natural to identify religion with creed that it is difficult at first to conceive of religion being anything else. To make such an identification, however, is in fact very provincial, — both spatially and temporally. The ancients, for instance, did not view matters at all in our way. A Greek thinker, such as Aristotle, could give up all belief in his country's gods, and yet never be regarded as a heretic provided he fulfilled regularly all the external duties which religious custom demanded. So it is with the Hindu. He has always enjoyed very ample liberty of thought, because he and his fellows have never conceived of religion as being in any way identical with creed. The Hindu atheist is in as good and regular standing as the polytheist, the theist, or the pantheist, and provided he lives according to the ancient customs is never regarded as in any way heretical. In fact Hinduism includes within itself every kind of creed, and from this point of view claims to be the only really universal religion extant. One of its defenders writes: —

"From the crudest kinds of animism to the most refined spiritual worships, all are accommodated by and accounted for in Hinduism. It believes that each religion and all the religions together are only 'feeling after' the Absolute. They are all true in their own proper place; and none possess the absolute and final revelation of the Infinite. And this is why Hinduism can legitimately claim to be the only true universal religion in the world.

"For Hinduism is not *one* religion like Christianity, Islam, or even Judaism; but correctly speaking it is a compendium of many creeds and cults, all united in a common culture and a common ideal-end. Hinduism accepts whatever may be or is

classed as religion as parts of itself. As a religion Hinduism has no quarrel either with Christianity or Islam, Judaism or Zoroastrianism. A Hindu, provided only he accepts the social economy and observes the purificatory laws and regulations of the Hindu culture, may well believe in and worship Jesus Christ, or acknowledge the authority of the Prophet of Medina in all matters of faith." [1]

Naturally there is an obverse side to this all-inclusiveness which does not appear so brilliant and attractive. As another Hindu puts it, "To-day Hinduism is an agglomeration of everything under heaven and earth, from the acutest philosophy to the most barbarous fetish worship; all shades of the highest ideals coupled with the most degrading practices are enfolded within its all-embracing creeds." [2]

It is inappropriate, then, to speak of Hinduism as "a faith." Hinduism means rather *the accepted manner of life of those born within certain castes and families in India.* When Hindus themselves refer to Hinduism they do not speak of it as a *religion:* they use the word *Dharma.* Only in the most general way can Dharma be said to mean *religion.* A better translation for it is *Law,* — the inner and constitutive and ideal nature of a thing. It corresponds somewhat to the Aristotelian *form.* Thus even non-sentient things have a dharma — heat being the dharma of fire and sound that of ether. It is the proper function or ideal nature of a thing. And thus dharma as applied to man and society will include the whole of human culture, in which each individual has his own part to play, his own duties to perform, so that the totality of men and gods, of earth and heaven, may form one complete and perfect whole. As this conception of dharma was formed before the Indians knew that there was any land but India, the word came to mean the civilization and ideals and traditional ways of acting of the Indians. Hinduism is thus "a culture, not a creed"; and from this point of view one of its admirers writes: —

"Dogmas and creeds may to some extent be imposed from the outside: but real piety must grow from within. And what is to be developed from within must work upon the inner nature

[1] *Hindu Review,* June, 1913, pp. 580–81.
[2] Govinda Das, *Hinduism and India.*

of the person in whom it is to grow. And as men's inner natures differ in the case of different people, so their religious duties and disciplines must also be different. What may be helpful to one person may not be helpful to another. There cannot be, therefore, any universal creed or any uniform ritual in a religion that seeks not to preach opinion, but to grow character." [1]

This decidedly *loose* organization of Hinduism comes out plainly in the question of the seat of authority. According to Manu this is to be found first of all in the Veda, after that in the *Smriti*, or Traditions, in the usages of good and noble men, and in one's own reason and experience. As to the way in which the term "Veda" shall here be interpreted the Hindus do not fully agree. Commonly the word is used to refer to the ancient hymns and verses of the earliest Indian Aryans and to the Brahmanas (or early ritualistic books) and the Upanishads. These, as making up the "Vedas," or the "Veda," are supposed to have been revealed to the ancient Aryan seers or "Rishis," at the beginning of our cycle. But we are also told repeatedly, that the Veda is eternal: that it is revealed to the Rishis at the beginning not only of our age, but at the beginning of every age, and by them disseminated among men. In this sense of the word, the Veda seems hardly to refer to our particular editions, say, of the Rig Veda or the Upanishads, but rather to be equivalent to Divine Truth as such. It is in this large sense that many of the more enlightened Hindus take the word.[2] Man has, according to the Hindu view, two kinds of knowledge — or at least is capable of having two kinds — a sensuous and a super-sensuous. The former includes all that is based on sense-perception and worked out by logic. The other is different in kind: it is an immediate intuition of Divine Truth, and it has quite a different organ from the senses or the intellect. It is potentially the same in all human beings though actually inexhaustible. The historical Vedas are the expression of it as it existed in the teachings of the ancient Rishis. As such they are reliable and authoritative. But the Divine Voice did not cease speaking when their ears were stopped. The days of

[1] Bipin Chandra Pal, *The Soul of India*, p. 220.

[2] Cf. the editorial on "The Seat of Authority in Hinduism," in the *Hindu Review* for September, 1913.

inspiration have never ceased and never will cease. Each of us is capable of the same *sort* of spiritual vision which the Rishis enjoyed, and innumerable religious teachers from their day to ours have added to their inspired message. The Hindu has a large confidence that all this inspired super-sensuous knowledge will be and must be consistent with itself, and in this trust he usually is not careful to compare the statements of new teachers with the words of the Vedas — though he may sometimes do so. The Vedas are authoritative — yes; but they have not been reduced to creeds and made the basis of systematic heresy trials.

But though Hinduism has no narrow creed and is "universal" in the sense that it has a place for every sort of contradictory belief, — atheism included, — it is decidedly provincial from another point of view. To be a Hindu one must have a definite place in the Hindu social structure. One must be born in a Hindu family and as a member of some particular caste. And if one is not fortunate enough to be a Hindu by birth there is no chance for him in this present life. You and I might accept Shiva and Vishnu with all their wives and avatars, we might learn the Vedas by heart and do puja before the lingam seven times a day with endless Ganges water, and we should come no nearer to being accepted as Hindus than we were at birth. Outsiders, indeed, have been accepted into Hinduism by the thousand; but this is only when whole tribes are adopted bodily and made over into Hindu castes by the local Brahmin authorities. And if you and I do not happen to belong to a tribe that the Brahmins will adopt entire, our only way of joining Hinduism is to die and take a chance on being born into a luckier tribe and a more fortunate family.[1]

Of course, birth within the fortunate fold is not enough. One may fall from grace. To retain one's position among the or-

[1] One cannot even *marry* into Hinduism, for the Dharma does not admit of Hindus being unequally yoked together with others and will not recognize the marriage between a Hindu and any one not born within the fold. If a woman of Christian or Moslem birth should be converted to full belief in Shiva and the rest, and should regularly practice all the appropriate pujas, it would still be impossible for her to marry a Hindu or be admitted to the Hindu temples. — Of late years, however, a back door into a quasi-Hinduism has been opened through the Brahmo and Arya Samajes.

thodox one must *observe Dharma;* one must perform the rites and duties and be true to the sacred customs which go along with the family and caste into which one has been born. Thus Hinduism is a very complex thing. It means a certain structure of society and a certain manner of life in relation to one's whole social, natural, and supernatural environment. It means obedience to certain customs and participation — or at least acquiescence — in certain conditions. Every study of Hinduism, therefore, which would not be unpardonably misleading must give at least some slight consideration to these customs and traditions, these social forms and these external duties.

Probably the most salient characteristic of the Hindu social structure is the caste system. Nearly every one who knows anything at all about India knows about caste, so little need be said of it here. It originated in the very natural division of ancient Aryan society into priests, warriors, and producers, — a division by no means peculiar to India but paralleled among many primitive peoples. As the Aryans in their gradual conquest of the Indian peninsula settled down in the midst of a darker and lower race, they felt the need of keeping their own blood pure from intermixture and took what means they could to prevent it. The two chief forces here operative were probably an unargued repugnance against close relations with a lower race, and a deliberate desire to keep unsullied their own dearly prized culture — exactly the same two forces, in short, that make the American of the Southern States emphasize the color line, and the Californian legislate against the "Yellow Peril." [1] The taboo upon intermarriage with the aborigines is thus easily understood, while the strange and often filthy customs of these aborigines and the unhygienic and even disgusting nature of

[1] The importance of the color line in the origin of Indian caste is reflected in the fact that one of the two Indian names for caste to-day is *varna*, or *color*. It is interesting to note that the American draws the line in just the same place where the ancient Aryan drew it and where the modern high-caste Indian draws it, — namely, on the questions of intermarriage and interdining. The Southerner is willing to praise Booker Washington and even to call him "Professor" (though never "Mister"); but let him dine with a white man and there is trouble. And it is noticeable that some of the Anglo-Indians who are quickest to attack the caste system make quite as much of color distinctions when they themselves are involved as does the intolerant high-caste Brahmin.

much of their food made the thought of interdining intolerable to the cleanly and punctilious invaders. As time went on social distinctions among the Aryans themselves stiffened and each class developed its own customs and its own class consciousness, and by mutual consent rules against intermarriage and interdining naturally came to mark more and more absolutely the distinction between the three great classes of Aryan society. At the same time the conquered and subject members of the aboriginal races, who were gradually absorbing much of the civilization of their conquerors, came to be recognized as on quite a different footing from those of the native inhabitants of the land who were as yet untouched by Aryan culture. Thus, long before the beginning of the Christian era there were four clearly recognized classes or castes: (1) the *Brahmins*, or priests; (2) the *Kshatriyas*, or warriors and rulers; (3) the *Vaisyas*, or producers, farmers, business men, artisans; and (4) the non-Aryan but civilized *Shudras*, or servants. Beside these there were the Fifth-Class men, the people who had no caste and were therefore lumped together under the title "Outcastes." And before this differentiation had been fully completed subdivisions began to be formed among the members of the great castes themselves. These subdivisions were due in part to local causes. Brahmins in remote parts of the country lost connection with each other, and while both parties retained the proud title of Brahmin and the priestly privileges, each community developed traditions of its own and refused to intermarry with the other. As the Aryans spread their culture over the land, moreover, the Brahmins adopted whole tribes of docile aborigines into the Hindu fold, and in so doing recognized them as subdivisions of the Shudra caste and even sometimes admitted them among the Vaisyas or Kshatriyas. The Outcastes also in time organized themselves on the Hindu model. As a result there are to-day over one hundred and fifty castes of Brahmins alone and more than twenty different castes (if we may use the word) among the Outcastes; while the total number of castes of all sorts is upwards of nineteen thousand.[1]

In a general way one may say that some such division of

[1] Stover, *India: a Problem*, p. 111. The number of main castes according to Professor Howells is 2378 (*The Soul of India*, p. 105).

society as the caste system is to be found in other lands besides India. The peculiar thing about the Indian system is the iron-bound nature given it by its *religious sanction.* The different castes were early regarded — and this is the orthodox theory to-day — not as different social classes, but as different races of men, as distinct from each other as different species of animals.[1] The four castes within the fold all came from God but from different parts of God, four separate creations being thus involved.[2] Thus the whole system was predetermined by God before creation, and all the minutest details of its administration have been for centuries regarded, and are still regarded, as having divine sanction. Probably no European has ever been better acquainted with Indian society than was the famous French missionary, the Abbé Dubois, who writes thus: —

"During the many years that I have studied Hindu customs I cannot say that I have ever observed a single one, however unimportant and simple, and I may add however filthy and disgusting, which did not rest on some religious principle or other. Nothing is left to chance: everything is laid down by rule, and the foundation of all their customs is purely and simply religion. It is for this reason that the Hindus hold all their customs and usages to be inviolable, for being essentially religious, they consider them as sacred as religion itself." [3]

But perhaps the most important factor in making the caste system peculiarly sacred in Hindu eyes is its connection with the theory of rebirth and Karma. According to this hypothesis (which to the Hindu is no hypothesis, but a fact) every one receives in this life what he earned in the last; and hence, as Farquhar puts it, a man's caste is "an infallible index of the state of his soul." If a man is a Brahmin, it is because he has earned that proud position through many lives of increasing

[1] It must be remembered, however, that in the Hindu's conception there is no such chasm between the different species of animals, or even between animals and men, as the West believes in. For Hinduism the animals are *souls* like ourselves, though clad in somewhat inferior bodies.

[2] One of the names of God in late Vedic times was "Purusha" and he is pictured in a late verse of the Rig Veda as having created the world by making a great sacrifice. "The Brahmin was his mouth; the Kshatriya was made from his arms; the being called Vaisya was his thighs; the Shudra sprang from his feet." X, 90, 12.

[3] *Hindu Manners, Customs, and Ceremonies*, p. 31.

purity and spirituality, and hence ought to be respected and obeyed; while the man who is born an Outcaste deserves to be.

But if the conception of transmigration and Karma has made the social structure of India sternly and sometimes cruelly rigorous, it has also given it a cosmic sanction and an ethical significance which once understood lend it a real dignity at least in ideal. For as the devout Hindu conceives of caste, it is an expression in human society of the fundamental purpose of the universe; it is an institution framed by the Rishis for the education of the soul. In our last chapter I said that in the Hindu view the world was a great school; and if we revert to this figure one may add that each of the great castes corresponds to one of the classes. Or to use a more Indian comparison, each of the four castes corresponds to one of the four periods into which (as we shall see) the life of the individual is ideally divided. The members of each caste, therefore, find their positions and their duties assigned to them by the moral laws of the universe, each being given (in theory) exactly the place for which his previous training and achievement (in former births) had prepared him. Thus human society is regarded as an organic whole in which each man has his own task to perform, by loyalty to which alone he must be judged; and he that is here and now faithful over a few things shall in the next incarnation be made master over many things.

The caste system in theory, therefore, is in some respects decidedly similar to Plato's theory of what the State should be. As the reader will remember Plato's ideal Republic was one in which each of the three great classes — the philosophers, warriors, and producers — performed its own duty fully and respected absolutely the duties and functions of the others.[1] The following words from the Bhagavad Gita hold (except in detail) almost as well of the Hellenic as of the Indian ideal: —

"Restraint of spirit and sense, mortification, purity, patience, uprightness, knowledge, discernment, and belief are the natural works of the Brahmins [philosophers].

[1] King Alfred's ideal was much the same, and was phrased in even more Indian fashion. In his version of the *De Consolatione* he writes: "A king must have men of prayer, men of war, and men of work. Without these tools no king may display his special talent." — Quoted in Taylor's *Mediæval Mind* (London, Macmillan, 1911), vol. I, p. 189.

"Valor, heroic temper, constancy, skill, steadfastness in strife, largesse, and princeliness are the natural Kshatriya [warrior] works.

"Tilling the ground, herding kine, and trading are the natural works of Vaisyas [or producers], and the natural work of the Shudra [the serf] is service.

"According as each man devotes himself to his own proper work does he attain to consummation. There is more happiness in doing one's own Law without excellence than in doing another's Law well." [1]

Whatever we may think of the caste system in practice, there is no denying that in theory it has some qualities to command our respect. It is no small boast of the Indian that in his land alone in the modern world, those who are regarded as the spiritual leaders of society are by universal agreement given a place unquestionably superior to the warrior and the ruler, while the social position of every one is supposed to depend not on wealth or power, but on the degree of his inner development. And if we could share the faith of the Hindu that Karma doeth all things well and that men are always born just where they deserve to be, we should probably feel more kindly toward the caste system than most of us outsiders do. Granted its cosmic presupposition, the institution has much to say for itself. But even so, there are very few, even among the Hindus, who will maintain that it is anything like a perfect system to-day. In the times of Manu, they tell us, it was perfect, but the race has so degenerated that the system is no longer what it was meant to be. And among the changes that have taken place in it, according to learned Hindus, one of the most unfortunate has been a steady stiffening and loss of elasticity. The ancient books recount a number of instances in which men have risen to a caste higher than that in which they were born by the exhibition of the powers and capacities characteristic of the higher caste. Such a rise is impossible to-day. A man's lot is pretty well settled for him on the day of his birth.

[1] XVIII, 42–47. That such a system of society must have had, especially in the distant past, great advantages is obvious. The Abbé Dubois points out that it has been a prime factor in the handing down of the ancient culture and in establishing various kinds of social restraints upon individual caprice. In fact, it seems to be the one thing in India for which he has a good word.

For not only does caste determine one's privileges and duties; in large part it determines his occupation as well. To the Brahmin, indeed, many occupations are open; but only he may teach the Veda or act as priest, and as we go down in the social scale less freedom of choice is permitted. Among the Shudras most of the subcastes take their names from the hereditary occupations of their members. Ask one of these men whether he is a Vaisya or a Shudra and he will say, "I don't know anything about that. I'm just a metal-worker, or a carpenter," etc. For in a great majority of cases the son is expected to follow his father's occupation.[1]

But the negative effect of caste is greater than its positive effect. One must not marry outside one's caste; one must eat only certain kinds of food, and food cooked only by certain people; one must never eat with a man of lower caste than one's self or receive water from him; one must not cross the ocean. Even so much as to touch an Outcaste brings contamination. The result is a spirit of complacent superiority and snobbishness on the part of a large number of high-caste people, and of servility on the part of the Outcastes that probably is not to be equaled elsewhere in the world. The Outcaste's shadow defiles a Brahmin. One sees Brahmin children driving away other children with proud looks and angry words because the latter had presumed to approach them. And the European himself as he threads his way through the narrow streets of Benares will see the crowd of bathers returning from the Ganges carefully keep their distance from him as they pass, lest his touch should impart impurity; and if by inadvertence they do touch him, they will sometimes go back to the river and bathe again to wash off the defilement. Three years ago in a town in the Northwest of India a Brahmin child fell into a well. All the men of the family were away and the women were unable to

[1] From this has arisen the misleading idea, so often expressed, that caste is more a matter of occupation than of descent (cf., for instance, the quite erroneous impression concerning caste given by Price Collier's *The West in the East*). When a caste is named for the occupation of its members, this does not mean that *all* its members follow the occupation in question, but that the majority do. Thus, for instance, a metal-worker might perfectly well belong to the "Potter" caste. Occupation *seems* to have more influence on caste than it really does.

reach the child. A "sweeper" (one of the lowest of Outcastes) ran up and offered to go down into the well and rescue the child, but his services were spurned and the child was allowed to drown. Better death than the defilement of child and well by the touch of a sweeper.[1]

As Farquhar says, these Outcastes, or "Untouchables," form one of the largest problems of modern India. "Though they have lived beside Hindus for more than two thousand years, so that they have absorbed the spirit of caste and certain rudimentary religious ideas from Hinduism, yet they have been treated with such inhumanity that they remain to this day in the most piteous poverty, dirt, degradation, and superstition. They are not allowed to live in the same village with Hindus. They must not approach a high-caste man, for their shadow pollutes. In South India they must not come within thirty yards of a Brahmin; and they are usually denied the use of public wells, roads, bridges, and ferries. They are not allowed to enter Hindu temples. Their religion is in the main an attempt to pacify demons and evil spirits. They number some fifty millions." [2]

The system, though it may seem to be made for the benefit of the higher castes, works its very unfortunate limitations among them as well. Thus the absurd prohibition against interdining is increasingly felt among intelligent men; and the taboo against crossing the ocean is a direct blow at education and culture. In the larger centers some of these taboos are being relaxed, but in the greater part of India they are carefully enforced by the caste authorities. A man may believe what he likes, he may deny all the gods and indulge in certain vices and crimes, and still retain his good standing in the caste; but let him accept a cup of water from a man of lower caste, and he shall answer for it before the tribunal. If found guilty he will do well to undergo all the purificatory ceremonies to which he will be condemned,[3] for if he refuse, the full strength

[1] Saint Nihal Singh, "India's Untouchables," *Contemporary Review* for March, 1913, p. 376.

[2] *The Crown of Hinduism*, p. 162.

[3] These consist usually in the payment of a large fine (commonly appropriated to defraying the cost of a banquet to all the caste) and in swallowing a pill prepared by the proper authorities and composed of the "five products of the cow." The pill is supposed to be spiritually as helpful as it is physically disgusting.

of social persecution will burst upon him. His father will turn him from his house; or if he be himself the head of a house his relatives will have nothing whatever to do with him; his friends will "cut" him; and he may even find it hard to induce any one to work for him — for the different castes sympathize with each other and aid each other in enforcing caste restrictions.

I wish it were possible for me to say better things of the caste system than I have been able to say. Sister Nivedita's description of it, as being practically equivalent to our conventions about "honor" and "*noblesse oblige*," seems to me an astoundingly misleading half-truth, which, while it has some basis in analogy, quite ignores the distinctive features of the system. Doubtless in primitive times caste had its use; but it is to-day an inexcusable anachronism which would in fact collapse almost at once if it were not sanctioned and supported by the Hindu religion. Fortunately for India its ancient Dharma is not burdened with many a weight so heavy as this.

The Hindu family is an immeasurably finer institution. In it both the beauty and the weakness of the Indian character and of the whole Indian point of view find themselves reflected to a striking degree: — and this because in fact, to a very large extent, they grow out of it. The contrast between the Indian family and the European is chiefly the contrast between social solidarity and individualism. The European family is a group of individuals; the Indian is an organism with various members. This, of course, is an exaggerated form of statement, but it suggests the contrast I have in mind. In India the family has still retained its ancient patriarchal form. When the young man marries he brings his wife home to his father's house, where his older brothers and their wives and children are living, and where every one is subject to the head of the house. So long as the common progenitor lives, the household is kept together and is under his sway, the members sometimes numbering seventy or eighty, or even more. Grandchildren and great-grandchildren are born in it; cousins are brought up like brothers; all the women are like mothers to all the children; each member of the household who earns anything by his labor puts his earnings into the common fund which is disposed of by the head of the house for the common good; all interests are

pooled, and the only real interests to be considered are in the interests of all. It is evident that children reared in such a family will receive a very different training from ours and will grow up with a point of view radically different from that which the West gives its youth. In such a family there will be relatively little individual responsibility for any but the head of the house, relatively little training in independence and initiative. On the other hand, there will be equally slight development of the coarser and more selfish aspect of individualism which is perhaps the fundamental danger of our Western culture. The Indian individual is lost in the family and the feeling of self and of selfish interests and rights gets but scant nourishment. And in a sense the whole of Indian society, of Indian history, of Indian philosophy and religion, is a reflection of this aspect of the Indian family.

The Indian ideal is that the father should have no will save the welfare of the family and that all the other members should have no will as opposed to his. And the family is a unit which not only is prior to its members, but which includes within itself the dead as well as the living. In fact the first duty of the living is to be faithful to the dead. A belief has been handed down in the Indian family which had its origin long before the Aryans entered India — a belief, namely, that the fathers who have gone before are in some way and to some extent dependent still on the care of their descendants. With this belief has come the custom of making simple offerings at regular times to the souls of the departed, a ceremony known as *shraddha* and regarded as one of the chief of all religious duties. Only a male descendant can offer the shraddha rites; hence the importance of the survival of the family in the male line; and hence also the prime duty of every man to marry and have a son. A son is a debt which each man owes his ancestors; and so important is the fulfillment of this duty that marriage can not be left to the caprice of the individual, but is a family affair, which the head of the house must arrange and in which the prospective bride and bridegroom have only to submit. In India marriage has nothing to do with falling in love, nothing to do with mutual passion and individual choice and romantic sentiment. Marriage is a religious duty and a religious sacrament, and its aim

is not the satisfaction of the individual, but the welfare of the family as a whole. From this point of view even polygamy is permitted and sometimes practiced. If after many years of married life no children are born, the husband may take a second wife in order to have a son who shall continue the family name and offer the shraddha rites. This is of rare occurrence, but the fact that it is regarded as legal or even laudable, and that it is not infrequently the first wife herself who urges the second marriage, emphasizes in an extreme form the Indian view of the family life.

Not only must the son subject his will to the will of his father: the wife must merge her personality in that of her husband. In Hindu theory a woman is always subject to somebody — to her parents before marriage and then to her husband, and if he should die, to his parents or her own again or to some male relative. Self-abnegation is perhaps a peculiarly Indian virtue, and Hindu society seems to have been especially constructed with a view to developing this virtue in its women. "To learn how she can offer most," writes Sister Nivedita, "becomes the aim of the young wife's striving. She cooks for her husband and serves him, sitting before him as he eats to fan away the flies. As a disciple might, she prostrates herself before him, touching his feet with her head before receiving his blessing. It is not equality. No. But who talks of a vulgar equality, asks the Hindu wife, when she may have instead the unspeakable blessedness of offering worship?" [1] Among the lower classes the women have considerable liberty, and one sees them in the streets and markets and working in the fields. But among the higher ranks of Hindu society the wife is secluded within the *zenana* or women's apartments, with her mother-in-law and her various sisters-in-law. She sees no men but those of her household, and with all of these but her own husband her relations are most formal, and she knows little of the outer world. As some one has put it, the windows of an Indian home all open inward. Moreover, as Indian girls are married at an extremely early age they have little time for school, and in fact receive but

[1] *The Web of Indian Life*, p. 45. Those who are acquainted with the condition of Indian women only from books written in criticism of Hinduism should read chapters II to VI of *The Web*.

slight "book-learning." In the deeper things and the more practical things of life they are indeed far from "uneducated," yet of the larger interests of the world they know but little and are ill-adapted to be intellectual companions for their husbands or to guide the mental development of their children.

This narrow and shut-in life has its beauties and its rewards. Within her home the woman has her own power and her universal respect. On the preceding page I said that in theory a woman is always subject to some male member of the family. This is the theory; but in practice the wife or the mother of the head of the house (or *karta*) has as much authority in domestic matters as he. This is true even if she happens to be a widow — as the mother of the karta, of course, always is. She may consult her son (or husband) if she likes, but there is no rule about it. And her authority she deserves and earns by constant devotion to the physical and spiritual interests of the family. "She superintends if she does not actually do all the cooking, and her life is one of strenuous activity and self-denial. If she is the widowed mother of the karta, she lives upon the coarsest of meals and wears the commonest of raiment. She works from morning to night. She fasts twice or thrice a month and keeps vigils for securing the blessings of the gods toward her children, and, to make assurance doubly sure, commands her daughters and daughters-in-law to do the same. . . . It is her pride to enforce purity and cleanliness with the utmost rigor. She bathes and changes her clothes half a dozen times a day. . . . The house is washed many times a day, and the cooking utensils undergo the pangs of constant friction. . . . And the other members of the family must follow her lead in this respect." [1]

Perhaps nowhere in the world is there more profound reverence for the mother than in India. Here as elsewhere self-renunciation brings its unsought rewards, and the meek inherit the earth. This high reverence paid to her is based on her devotion to her husband, a devotion which Hindu society insists shall be so complete that if the husband dies the wife must never even think of marrying again.

"Let her follow the ways and rules of Brahmacharis," says

[1] W. J. Wilkins, *Modern Hinduism* (London, Unwin, 1887), p. 24.

Manu of the widow, "improving her soul and her knowledge by the way of study and service of the elders, in place of the lost way of service of her husband and children. Let her triumph over her body and walk in the path of purity. . . . Unto heaven shall she go to join her partner-soul if she be thus faithful to his memory and do deeds of good during the rest of her physical life." [1] Marriage is for eternity in India, and in the belief of many a Hindu a faithful and loving husband and wife are reunited in marriage not only in the heaven that follows this life, but in the earthly reincarnation which shall for them follow heaven. Before the English came the Hindu widow used to immolate herself upon her husband's funeral pyre — thus completing in a last glorious act of utter abnegation a life that had been one long self-surrender. English law put a stop to this custom in 1829, but the result has been the turning of the rest of the widow's life into a prolonged burning of self. The position and life of the Indian widow varies, of course, with the personality of the woman and with the family in which her lot is cast. From writers like Dubois one would judge that she is always an object of heartless persecution, a sad and unwilling drudge; while Sister Nivedita and her school would have one suppose that the Hindu widow is ever loved and fondly cared for and that she becomes a nun given over to good works, which spring spontaneously from her sorrow-crowned character. Both views are doubtless true in their limited way, and neither should be accepted without modification from the other. Certainly the widow's lot is a sad one at best; and stern Hindu theory believes that it should be sad, that for the widow sadness is better than joy. And doubtless those widows who acquiesce in this judgment and give themselves up willingly to a life of utter self-abnegation and service shine at the end as gold purified by fire. As the recent quotation from Wilkins shows, the widowed mother of the head of the house has a position not only of respect and affection, but of authority and power. Younger widows, of course, have no such authority, but they have nearly as much work, and if the service be not willing much of it must be performed none the less, and for the young woman who has

[1] v, 158–60. Quoted by Bhagavan Das, *The Laws of Manu* (Benares, T.P.S., 1910), p. 212.

no ambition to be a martyr or a nun the fate of widowhood in India is very hard indeed.

On the whole, the Indian home is a very narrow and limited place, but it may be a very sweet and holy place as well; and it has produced a type of woman who knows how to love and how to suffer and be faithful and lose herself in those she loves: a type that has great limitations, but which is not without a certain lofty beauty, — even though at the antipodes from that of the modern militant suffragette.

The family relations within the Indian home are often very sweet. The children are commonly idolized and in their earlier years allowed to have very nearly their own way. "Spoiled" children are almost the rule. Miss Munson tells of a boy of eight, chasing his mother and beating her very severely with a stick because she was late in preparing his dinner. And she adds: "On the whole I cannot imagine any children less controlled than those of India. After the children are grown, however, they show an attractive reverence and dutifulness to the parents unusual in the West. To marry against the parents' command, to resent physical punishment, even though the receiver far exceed the giver in size, or to grumble against the burden of an aged and childish parent, would be, I should say, quite foreign to the East Indian." [1]

The affection of the Indian child or youth, moreover, extends in very real strength not only to his parents, but to his grandparents as well, and the relation between distant generations within the household is often beautiful. Devendranath Tagore gives in his "Autobiography" a glimpse of his old grandmother and her Hindu piety and his relation to her as a boy: —

"My grandmother was very fond of me. To me also she was all in all during the days of my childhood. My sleeping, sitting, eating, were all at her side. Whenever she went to Kalighat I used to accompany her. I cried bitterly when she went on pilgrimages to Jaganath and Brindaban leaving me behind. She was a deeply religious woman. Every day she used to bathe in the Ganges very early in the morning; and every day she used to weave garlands of flowers with her own hands for the *Shalgram*. Sometimes she used to take a vow of solar adoration,

[1] *Jungle Days* (New York, Appleton, 1913), p. 158.

giving offerings to the sun from sunrise to sunset. On these occasions I used to be with her on the terrace in the sun. At other times grandmother used to hold a Vaishnavite festival, and the whole night there was recitation and singing of hymns, the noise of which would not let me sleep. She used to look after the whole household and do much work with her own hands. Owing to her skill in housekeeping, all domestic concerns worked smoothly under her guidance. After everybody else had taken their meals she would eat, and always food cooked by herself. She was as lovely in her appearance as she was skilled in her work and steadfast in her religous faith. But she had no liking for the frequent visits of the Vaishnavite priestess. There was a certain freedom of mind in her, together with her blind faith in religion. I used to accompany her to our old family house to see the family idol. But I did not like to leave her and go to the outer apartments. I would sit in her lap and watch everything quietly from the window." [1]

The Hindu emphasis on the unselfishness of women would naturally tend, one would suppose, to have the opposite effect upon the men. And indeed to some extent it does.[2] Yet the young man as well as the young woman learns to put the common interest of the family before his own and to forget himself in the larger whole. And beside this general influence Hinduism has for him a lifelong training of ritualistic observance which gives almost every act of his life a religious significance.

In the "good old days" to which almost all intelligent Hindus look back with pride and longing, and which they reconstruct in part out of their own imagination, — in the good old

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 1–2.

[2] The Indian man is quite lacking in many of the delicate courtesies toward women which we of the West regard as an indispensable sign of good-breeding. In part this is doubtless due to a mere difference of conventions. But it also goes deeper than that, and is largely the result of the seclusion of Indian women. The Indian of the upper classes never meets with any ladies of his own rank outside his own household and hence does not know how to act with them and has no training in self-control in relation to the other sex. An English lady who entertains many Oriental college students in her home near Birmingham tells me she has had to give up inviting Indians because they do not know how to treat ladies properly. And an Indian friend of mine says that he fears four out of five young Indians, if left alone with a lady, would go wrong. Their characters are weak because they have been so assiduously kept from temptation.

days when the conditions still existed out of which the Hindu system developed and which it was meant to meet, — the life of each male member of the three upper or Aryan castes was supposed to be divided into four periods, provided, of course, that one survived to a fairly advanced age. And though not many Indians to-day complete all the stages of this fourfold life, it is still the ideal. Infancy and early childhood are not included in these four stages, and the boy's real life is supposed to begin at the ceremony of initiation which marks the end of childhood, — namely, the investiture of the sacred triple cord. This ceremony has always been regarded as of great importance, signalizing the introduction of the youth into a new life — the life not of the flesh, which as a child he has been living, but the life of the spirit. For this reason members of the three upper castes, who alone are permitted to wear the sacred triple cord, are known as "the twice-born." The ceremony is performed when the boy is between five and nine years of age,[1] and is a very elaborate affair. It requires some three or four days for its performance and is done with the assistance of many Brahmins, who on all great occasions are present in large numbers and must be ceremoniously fed. At this time also the boy is usually taught the Gayatri, or invocation to the sun, which is the universal prayer of Hinduism; or if he belong to some sect he is given by his guru or religious teacher some secret mantra which he must learn and a copy of which he must wear on his arm or around his neck, and which he must never divulge to others.

These mantras are of extreme importance in Hinduism, and the repetition of them forms the central part of most ceremonies. A mantra is a verse, usually taken from the Veda, the mere repetition of which is supposed to produce supernatural effects. This idea is evidently the survival of very primitive notions about magic. Magical formulas, exactly on a par with Hindu mantras, are to be met with in every ancient and every primitive religion. The odd thing is that this childish superstition should have survived in such strength among men as intelligent as are many modern Hindus. Most Hindus view the mantras in the old magical way, while a few — especially those under

[1] This is the theory. In practice it is sometimes postponed several years.

the influence of the Theosophical Society — seek to justify the use of mantras by appeal to "modern science." For the mantras, it seems, produce "vibrations" in the ether which affect the various sheaths of the soul in various ways. Hence mantras are of great service in tuning the spirit properly at the time of initiation and at all the other great turning-points of life.

Once initiated, the boy enters into the first or student stage of the life of the twice-born, and is known as a *brahmachari*. In the old days the youth was now sent away from home to study the religion and philosophy of his race with some learned and saintly man in a secluded place, and there he remained till past twenty, when he returned home to be married to a bride of his father's choosing. This excellent custom has long since been given up for the majority, and the practice of marrying off the boys while still very young has robbed the brahmachari stage of most of its years and most of its significance.

Marriage is a very important and sacred sacrament for the Hindu, and like every other turning-point of life is regarded not as a civil but as a religious act. It also marks the young man's entrance into the second stage of life, that of the *grihastha* or householder. His duty now is to be an honorable and useful member of society, to beget sons to carry on the name of the family and the offerings to the ancestors, and to act, when the time comes, as the responsible head of the house. The third ideal stage of life for the twice-born is that of the *vanaprastha*, or "forest dweller," as it is usually translated. This name, however, must not be taken to imply that one who has entered this stage lives far from the haunts of men. The ideal is rather that the man whose active work in the world is done, and whose children are now grown and self-supporting so that they no longer need his aid, should retire with his wife from active pursuits, and, living in the outskirts of his village or city, have leisure for self-culture and for the more general service of the community through the accumulated wisdom of his years. Finally, leaving his wife and all his possessions but a staff and begging-bowl, he should enter the fourth stage, that of the sannyasi. The ideal for this final stage of life (as an Indian friend of mine puts it) was that "as an old man one

should spend one's last years in meditation, and should wander at will — not as a beggar, but as a revered and welcome guest, whose presence disseminated goodness and blessing."

The third of these stages has to-day practically ceased to exist, and though there are a good many sannyasis in India the fourth stage is far from forming the regular end of the twice-born's earthly pilgrimage. Hence it will be seen that the grihastha or householder's condition has steadily encroached upon the others and constitutes for most twice-born Hindus to-day almost the whole of life. But the life of the ideal householder is by no means only a worldly affair. The faithful Hindu, to whatever stage of life he belongs, is constantly reminded that every day and every hour is sacred, and that the purification and development of the soul is the chief end of man. When he awakes in the morning his first thought must be a prayer, and an elaborate ritual is mapped out for him which, if carried out completely, would leave little opportunity in his whole day for anything else.[1] Not many Hindus to-day perform all the rites recommended; but all of them are very faithful in observing the sacred bathings which their religion commands, and most of them offer at least a few of the prayers and pious observances which form so important a part of their sacred Dharma. To Hinduism cleanliness is not *next* to godliness: it is a very part of godliness. The morning bath is a form of prayer and it must be performed not hastily nor thoughtlessly, but seriously, soberly, and with the proper prayers and meditations. For the bath should be spiritual as well as physical; the Hindu seeks to begin the day with a pure body and also a pure soul. In theory, the bath should if possible be performed in the Ganges or some sacred body of water; if this be inconvenient the domestic basin will do, but one's mind should be fixed upon the waters of the sacred stream. Various prayers and meditations are recommended for use before, during, and after the bath, together with the repetition of various divine names, reading from the Sacred Scripture, breathing exercises, the placing of the fingers in various positions, libations of water, etc. Some of these prayers sound to us extremely formal and some even absurd, while

[1] For a minute account of this entire programme see Dubois, *op. cit.*, part II, chap. VII.

others are petitions of a genuinely moral sort.[1] A surprisingly large number of Hindus are faithful to the often irrational minutiæ of this ritual; while nearly all observe, together with their bath, the recitation of the Gayatri and meditation on the mysterious and divine syllable *Aum* or *Om*. The Gayatri, as I have said, is an invocation to the sun and is the most universal and sacred form of prayer in India.[2] The following is a translation of it: — "Aum, earth, sky, heaven, Aum. Let us meditate upon that excellent vivifier, the Light Divine, which enlightens our understanding!" This Vedic verse (which every good Hindu should repeat from eight to several hundred times a day) is held to contain, if rightly interpreted, the essence of all true religion and philosophy. And as the Gayatri is the quintessence of religious philosophy, so is the syllable AUM the quintessence of the Gayatri. It is a symbol, in short, for all that the Hindu believes concerning God and the soul, and as such the repetition of it, together with the repetition of the Gayatri, is well adapted to raise his thoughts to the highest plane and to put him into the devotional state of mind. Protestant Christians may perhaps fail to understand this; but the Catholic Church has long acted upon the principle that the repetition of certain familiar words may be of assistance to the mind in meditating upon themes which, though not literally expressed by the words, have become closely associated with them through many past repetitions. Witness the constant use of the Rosary, and the real devotion which it often is a means of arousing and sustaining. There can be no doubt that though the Gayatri and the syllable Aum are often repeated by Hindus in a purely formal and mechanical manner, with many a pious soul they have the same religious value that the Rosary has with the good Catholic.

After the morning bath and morning prayer, there is a long list of ceremonies for the Hindu to perform during the rest of

[1] For many samples of them see Dubois, *loc. cit.*

[2] It is usually said as a prayer to the Deva Surya, the sun god, and one should stand facing the sun while repeating it. Some, and especially the more philosophical, do not regard the Gayatri as a prayer, but as a form of meditation on the ultimate and impersonal Reality. Some, in repeating it, seek to absorb part of the physical and ethereal radiance that comes from the Lord of Day.

the day if he has the time and the devotion; and all but the more lax perform at least the household puja before each meal. And when night comes, the day ends with a prayer as it began.

And life is like the day. It begins with the rites of religion at birth. Each of its greater and lesser turning-points is sanctified by some religious ceremony. And when the man dies his body is religiously burned, and if possible his ashes are thrown into the Ganges or some other sacred stream — the funeral ceremonies and offerings to his spirit being continued usually for ten days. The last act in his drama is in a sense an endless one: for it is the shraddha offering, which his son begins for his special benefit two or three weeks after his death, and which is continued for him and for all the dead of the family at regular intervals as long as the family is represented by a male descendant upon earth. These shraddha rites consist chiefly in the offering of rice-balls to the dead, with the repetition of the suitable mantras, the ceremony ending, as most religious ceremonies end in India, with the feeding of Brahmins. The conception is that the funeral rites will help the departed onward from the ghost world (*preta loka*) to the heaven of the fathers (*pitri loka*); while the rice-balls and offerings of the shraddha ceremony will develop and support him there and acquire merit which he may use in his further progress. Very evidently we have here the remains of at least two quite different concepts, the animistic idea of the ghost which must be fed, and the large, moral conception of transmigration. The former of these goes back to extremely primitive times, and is quite out of keeping with the more philosophic Hindu conceptions which are many thousand years younger than it. And in this respect shraddha is very properly Hindu; for the ritual as well as the creed of Hinduism includes all manner of contradictory elements, the primitive, animistic, and magical existing alongside of elements full of spiritual symbolism. And so the whole of the Hindu's life is punctuated with nonsense or with philosophy, according as he takes it. The spiritual man, by making the most of what he finds, and reading into it a good deal of symbolism (often justified by good taste rather than by history), is able to get from the religious observances of the Hindu Dharma much genuinely religious nourishment for the spiritual life; while the

rank and file of Hindus, who (like the rank and file in some other places) are likely to think that they shall be heard for their much speaking, find in the observances of tradition certain fortunate formulas and lucky acts which are magical short-cuts to all sorts of desirable goals, and which, instead of being incentives to moral endeavor, may often be regarded as substitutes for it. Unto the pure all things are pure, and Hindu worship, like other worships, depends on the worshiper.

And yet this much must be said: that the life of the Hindu is essentially a *religious* life. By this I do not mean that it is a superstitious life or one filled with pious performances. It is that, but it is more than that. It is a life lived in conscious and constant recognition of a wider environment than the merely immediate and physical; and in unfailing realization of relations that bind human life to a supernatural world. We may smile at the particular rites by which the Hindu expresses his attitude toward Reality; but the attitude itself must command the respect of every one who respects humanity at all. The Hindu believes that humanity's really significant environment is a spiritual environment; that the physical world about us is only the garment through which the spiritual Reality dimly shines; and that the one important question is the eternal destiny of the soul. And the Hindu sees in his Dharma a system of training for the spirit in its fateful struggle with a world of matter, by the aid of which it may win its freedom and come to its own at last. Many, indeed, — perhaps most, — see this but dimly; but in the background it is always there. And underneath all the strange noises of Hinduism, like the distant murmur of the sea, there sounds ever the far-off music of the soul.

CHAPTER VIII

TEACHERS, PRIESTS, AND HOLY MEN

ONE'S opinion of the value of Hindu education will depend largely on one's notions of the nature of education in general. As to book-learning, there is certainly little enough of it in India. Yet fortunately there still remains a goodly share of that training and culture through example and tradition which, in the ancient world at any rate, often made cultured men of the illiterate. The Indian child in a conservative and pious Hindu family absorbs, with his mother's milk and with the air he breathes, the ancient customs of his country, its ideals and its moral practices and religious views. He is brought up in an atmosphere of worship and faith and of dignified and courteous manners; and courtesy, faith, and worship thus become his second nature. Even of philosophy he acquires an elementary knowledge, quite as a matter of course.[1] Naturally everything here depends on family customs and local traditions; and among the lower castes, where Hinduism is at its weakest and its worst, the training of the children is correspondingly neglected, and the effect of example and influence may be positively harmful.

Of explicit religious teaching there is less than one would perhaps expect, and among the lower classes, in fact, hardly any. The more careful Brahmin fathers of the old school teach their sons a little Sanskrit, and many give their boys a somewhat careful religious education. The priest comes regularly to the house, and has the boys commit to memory certain passages from some of the Sacred Books, such as the Mahabharata, and also teaches them to perform certain ceremonies. Some fathers send their sons to Sanskrit schools. These schools are as a rule simply small and informal classes held

[1] Dr. Taraporewalla, of the Central Hindu College, estimates that perhaps ten per cent of the Hindus understand *something* of the philosophy of Hinduism.

in some monastery by some learned monk. In recent years, however, a few large schools, for boarders as well as day-scholars, have been started by Hindu reformers, in which the boys receive a good modern education with Sanskrit and religious instruction as optional or required subjects. Most fathers belonging to the lower classes, and even the majority of the "twiceborn," do not take the trouble to send their sons to religious schools, and bring them up quite ignorant of Sanskrit. Many Brahmin fathers who know no Sanskrit themselves are careful to teach their sons a few Sanskrit prayers (including of course the Gayatri), and train them to repeat these twice a day. But in the majority of cases the son is never taught the meaning of these prayers, which therefore remain to him, to the end of his days, hardly more than unintelligible syllables with a pious sound, — in spite of which he continues to repeat them scrupulously, as his father did before him. The great majority of Hindu fathers, if we count in the lower classes, do not teach their children even these few Sanskrit prayers. A very large proportion [1] of Hindu children thus grow up without any systematic and explicit religious teaching whatever. Incidentally, of course, they pick up more or less from the conversation and the example of those around them. They see their father or grandfather do puja for the whole family in the home and they watch all the members of the household bow before the shrine, and by the unescapable force of imitation they are constrained to follow their example. They see people going to the temples and they may wander in themselves and watch them doing puja there, and again they may follow the example. But they are not made to go to the temples, nor taught how to worship. If they learn to read their own language they will probably sometimes dip into the Gita or into Tulsi Das's Ramayana, — the favorite religious books of India; and even if they cannot read they will inevitably hear the story of Rama and Sita and learn from it the ideals of patience, endurance, loyal friendship, and devotion which India loves. Then occasionally — very occasionally — strolling preachers come to the village or stop on the city street, and read from the books mentioned, or from

[1] A prominent and learned pundit of my acquaintance places the figure at roughly ninety-nine per cent.

one of the Puranas. And of course it is impossible to live among Hindus and not learn something of Shiva, Vishnu, and the other gods. Thus what one might call a working knowledge of the Hindu religion is appropriated and assimilated by even the ignorant, though as a matter of course it is seldom the best of Hinduism and often the worst that is learned in this haphazard way. One learns to go through certain ceremonies without knowing — without even asking — the reason why. The inner significance, if such there be, is thus quite lost. And instead of being taught the finer side of Indian thought, the average Hindu, especially of the lower classes, usually gets hold chiefly of a number of silly stories and a considerable amount of harmful superstitions.

That small section of Hindu society which has come under the influence of Western thought, though freed from superstitions and meaningless ceremonies, is not much better off so far as religious education is concerned than are the ignorant lower classes. Most of these educated Hindus have turned away from the religion of their fathers without getting anything religious in its place. They teach their children English and chemistry instead of the truths of the ancient Dharma; and as for prayers, their children say none of them whether in Sanskrit or in any other tongue.[1]

The child's first religious instructor is his father, and in most cases instruction ends there. Yet many careful fathers place their children under the guidance of a guru, or professional religious teacher; and many a man and woman retain the services of a guru as a kind of father-confessor to the end of life. The gurus of the past must have been a very reverend and noble company if one may judge by the almost universal respect which the title guru still carries with it. The Vedanta Sara describes the ideal guru thus: —

[1] "Nine out of every ten of the Hindus to-day who are coming out of the schools and colleges may be said never, from morning to night, from week to week, and from year to year, to trouble themselves with the thought of God or of religion." "The Hindus of the present day seem to be fast losing the spiritual-mindedness of their forefathers. . . . That magnificent unworldliness of the Hindu, that high appreciation of the value of life, that unique example of plain living and high thinking, has become rare to-day." (Hem Chandra Sarkar in the *American Journal of Theology*, October, 1909.)

"A true guru is a man who is in the habit of practicing all the virtues; who with the sword of wisdom has lopped off all the branches and torn out all the roots of sin, and has dispersed with the light of reason the thick shadows in which sin is shrouded; who behaves with dignity and independence; who has the feelings of a father for all his disciples; who makes no difference in his conduct between his friends and his enemies, and shows equal kindness to both; who looks on gold and precious stones with the same indifference as on pieces of iron or potsherd, and values the one as highly as the other; whose chief care is to enlighten the ignorance in which the rest of mankind is plunged." [1]

The Abbé Dubois, from whom I take this quotation, comments upon it thus: "This is what the Hindu gurus ought to be, but are not." And he proceeds to devote a chapter to the ignorance, immorality, and mercenary nature of all the gurus in India. As usual, the truth seems to lie somewhere between the two extremes. The almost passionate reverence which is still felt in many parts of India for the guru is hardly explicable if all teachers of religion are as depraved as the good abbé would have us believe. Many of them at least are not lazy. Gurus belonging to the two great sects and those teaching some form of *yoga* are particularly active, some even carrying their teaching and their puja to the homes of outcastes. Enthusiastic followers of yogins and spiritual reformers not infrequently turn guru and carry the new spiritual teaching over a wide area. Dr. Clough, the missionary to the Telugus, found as his right-hand man an outcaste who had been taught yoga by a woman guru, and had himself become a guru in his turn, teaching the doctrine he had learned from her. He afterwards became an enthusiastic Christian preacher, but Dr. Clough says "there was little in his [former] teaching which he afterwards had to contradict as evil." In fact, not only this man, but nearly all Dr. Clough's most reliable native preachers, had either been Hindu gurus themselves or had got their first real religious training from gurus of the Raja Yoga. "Sitting at the feet of Raja Yoga Gurus," says the good doctor, "even though many of them were worthless, had been a rich experience to them which they

[1] Quoted by the Abbé Dubois, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

would not willingly have missed out of their lives." [1] And the entire district seems to have been prepared for Christianity in a very real and valuable sense by the previous labors of these Hindu teachers.

Yet gurus of this finer sort are decided exceptions, and the influence of the class as a whole is rather slight, owing to the fact that so many of them visit their disciples but once a year. On the whole there can be little doubt that "the true guru," in India, is very hard to find; and that most of the professional Brahmin teachers, who supply the young with mantras and give advice on religious matters, are "not in business for their health," but make a good living off the credulity of their flock, and in moral matters are no better than they should be. Govinda Das writes: "Puranic preachers and innumerable sectarian *sadhus*, *bairagis*, etc., are mostly reactionaries of a bad type, catering to the passions and prejudices of the mob for the purpose of exploiting them." [2] Another Hindu writes: "Both the guru and the priest vie with each other in ignorance and conceit. Both are covetous, unprincipled, and up to every vice; but the guru is much more revered than his adversary, owing to the former being a less frequent visitor, and the speculative and mysterious nature of his avocations." [3]

In some sects the guru need not be a Brahmin; but the priest must. All priests are Brahmins, though by no means all Brahmins are priests. Those that go into the priesthood in fact — strange as it may seem to us — are the least respected members of their caste. The name "Brahmin" is still a word to conjure with in India, but when coupled with the word "priest," it loses much of its glory. This at least is true in the more intelligent circles, while the Indian villager, still sunk deep in superstition, sometimes regards the priest as possessed of magic and supernatural powers which make him an object of admiration and awe. The more able members of the caste (especially in the cities) go into professions where more money and greener laurels are to be won than in the priesthood. It is

[1] *Social Christianity in the Orient* (New York, Macmillan, 1914), pp. 94 and 197.

[2] *Hinduism and India*, p. xiv.

[3] Quoted from *The Hindu Family in Bengal*, by Wilkins, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

usually the less progressive individuals who are content to go into the temple business. And not every priest has a temple, though every temple has a priest and sometimes many. But there is plenty of work to be done outside the temples — painting the sacred marks of sect and caste upon the foreheads of the faithful, giving instruction to them, performing the various domestic ceremonies to which reference has been made in the previous chapter, and attending ceremonies where other Brahmin priests preside, but where all Brahmins are fed. Many of the temple priests hold their office by hereditary right. Especially is this the case with the larger temples, where a number of priests are employed. These temples often are richly endowed, owning large tracts of land from the income of which the priests are supported and the expenses of the temple service are defrayed. One of the priests of the Kalighat temple in Calcutta told me that at his place of business there were about a dozen hereditary priests, and that they took turns in doing the public puja, each one serving two or three days a month, and seeing to the distribution of food to the beggars — for every day at the temple beggars are fed and clothed. The rest of his time, so far as I could make out, was given in part to teaching young men out of the Tantras, but chiefly to loafing. A zealous Hindu whom I met in the Madura temple described the forty hereditary priests of that great shrine as "ignorant, gluttonous, and lazy." The (Hindu) translators of the Garuda Purana in their Introduction write thus of the way in which the priests use their influence over the people: —

"The after-life consequences of minor sins can be warded off by appropriate penances. And here is a rich field which the Brahmin priestcraft of India, preying on the gullibility of its votaries, has exploited to its extreme extent. For every sin there is a penance and also a pilgrimage, with its concomitant result in the shape of so much fee to be paid to the Brahmins. Penances have become a farce in modern India. They can be compounded by the payment of amounts ranging from a cowrie shell to thousands of rupees to Brahmins. It is not that the gifts to a deserving man wash away sin, for modern Hinduism has done everything in its power to throw in the background that rational idea, but a gift to a Brahmin, however bad he may

be, — as the saying goes that no one feeds a docile monkey, but a kicking cow for the sake of her milk."

In short, the Brahmin priest has a very bad name in India. I do not remember hearing a good word spoken for any of the class except by priests themselves. In Benares their reputation is exceedingly evil. Indian gentlemen in that city told me that the temples were sometimes brothels, and that the priests were not only dishonest and corrupt, but not uncommonly misused the confidence which Hindu women placed in them to deceive and betray them. In southern India conditions seem to be even worse than in the north. For in the large southern temples women as well as men are employed in the cult. There are two classes of these women: — nautch girls who dance before the god, and the wives of the god, — girls who in infancy have been given by their parents in marriage to the deity. I hardly need add that both these classes of women are in fact religious prostitutes, and that when a girl becomes the wife of a god, the deity is in fact represented by his faithful priests.[1]

Fortunately for India, the Brahmin priest is not really representative of her religious life. Much more genuinely typical as well as much more deeply religious is that characteristically Indian figure, the sannyasi,[2] the "renouncer." For the word is used here to include not only those who having completed the householder stage have entered into the final stage of the ideal life, but also all those who from whatever cause and at whatever age have turned their back upon home and renounced the world in order to devote all their energies to the attainment of what they deemed a higher goal.

[1] Even worse accusations than these are made against the priests in parts of southern India. See Dubois, *op. cit.*, part III, chap. IV, especially pp. 593–96.

[2] The word "sannyasi" is commonly used with a variety of meanings of which the following are the more important: (1) "renouncer" (its literal meaning); (2) one who has entered upon the fourth stage of the ideal life of the twice-born; (3) a member of some one of the Hindu monastic orders; (4) the term is sometimes limited so as to apply only to members of certain orders, e.g., the more strict orders founded by Shankara and by Ramanuja, or sometimes only the former. The word "sadhu" is used almost synonymously with sannyasi. This word means originally "good" or "religious." It is also sometimes used to include all "renouncers" and is sometimes restricted to mean only the members of certain orders, such as the Vaishnava orders or the less strict orders of Shankara.

World renunciation is a phenomenon of long standing in India and its aim has been twofold: (1) to attain by a solitary life and by methods of penance certain magical powers over nature, man, and the gods; (2) to conquer the flesh and purify the soul. The history of the movement shows a parallel gain and loss. For the second of the aims just mentioned has steadily gained in popularity upon the first, the thought of magical power playing ever a smaller part in comparison with the aim of freeing the spirit from the flesh and uniting it with the divine; while, on the other hand, under the cloak of the true sannyasi have taken shelter increasing crowds of lazy and irreligious beggars who have jumped at the opportunity of living off the community by assuming the garments of the pious. This factor of laziness formed no part of the ideal as originally conceived and as practiced for many centuries in India. The sannyasi was to be inactive, yes; but only because activity was conceived as binding the soul to this world. And his outer inactivity covered a very active inner life, a life so far removed from one of selfish laziness that it was marked at every moment by genuine renunciation.

The sannyasi, as India understands the ideal, should prize the spiritual life so highly that everything else seems to him but dross. His every moment must be given up to systematic self-training by which all the old ties may be broken and all the world's inverted values be turned upside down again. He must give up home and family and friends and possessions and wander out to live alone, or in a company of other renouncers like himself. He must beg his meals and so be dependent upon the charity of others for his very life. He must own nothing but his yellow robe, his staff and bowl, perhaps a few very simple utensils, a rosary for his prayers, and one or two symbolic religious objects corresponding to the crucifix of Christian monks. Sometimes he will wear in place of the yellow robe only a loincloth, or sometimes nothing at all — for in India nakedness is a token that one has learned so to despise the body that he has almost forgotten its existence. To it and to all the pleasures of life he must study *indifference.* Indifference is one of his greatest virtues, for it is the negative side of that positive searching after God, that realization of the divine within himself which is

his one great business. The ideal set up for him is thus expressed in the ancient Scriptures: —

"Let him not wish for death, let him not wish for life, let him wait for the time, as a servant for his wages. . . . Let him endure harsh language, and let him not insult any one; nor relying on his body let him make an enemy of any one. Let him not return anger to the angry, let him bless when cursed. . . . Rejoicing in the Supreme Self, sitting indifferent, refraining from sensual delights, with himself for his only friend, let him wander here on earth, aiming at liberation." [1]

The ideal sannyasi, however, though freed from particular ties, is in one sense every one's friend, for he sees in all the One Self, without barrier between, and he feels their sufferings as his own. It is related of Pundit Bijoy Krishna Goswami, who died only a few years ago, that "to see any keen human suffering was, for him, to have it directly transferred to his own sensations. One wintry morning he was sitting facing the public road when all of a sudden he seemed to take ill with a severe fit of shivering. His people did not know what it meant or what to do. A disciple, however, noticed that his eyes were fixed on a decrepit old beggar seated on the footpath on the other side of the public road, who was shivering in all his bare limbs at the touch of the sharp and frosty morning breeze. He at once took the heavy blankets that covered the master's body, and running out to the street, put them around the old beggar. As soon as this was done, the master came back to himself and all his shivering ceased." [2]

Let me point out, in passing, that this very typical story illustrates that in which the holy man of India falls short as well as that in which he excels. The Pundit appears to have felt the beggar's suffering more keenly than a Christian saint would have done; and yet it seems never to have occurred to him to throw his blankets over the poor fellow. For aught the story shows, had it not been for the disciple's desire to stop his master's shivering fit, both master and beggar would have continued to shiver on indefinitely. The truth is the sannyasins as a class have never been characterized by any great eagerness to

[1] Laws of Manu, VI, 45, 47, 48, 49.
[2] Bipin Chandra Pal, *op. cit.*, pp. 56–57.

serve their fellows. In fact a life of active helpfulness is no part of the sannyasi ideal, for *inactivity* in externals is one of the things that he must carefully practice. His life is one of inwardness almost exclusively. Its aims and its struggles and its victories are all subjective. This is its weakness and this should be plainly recognized and understood. Once seen, however, it should not blind us to the finer side of the sannyasi ideal, — the victory of the spirit over the flesh, the purifying and the training of the soul, the power to see the Divine under the meanest of disguises.

Ramakrishna once said to his disciples: —

"I have now come to a stage of realization in which I see that God is walking in every human form and manifesting Himself alike through the sage and the sinner, the virtuous and the vicious. Therefore when I meet different people, I say to myself: 'God in the form of the saint, God in the form of the sinner, God in the form of the unrighteous, and God in the form of the righteous.' He who has attained to such realization goes beyond good and evil, above virtue and vice, and realizes that the divine will is working everywhere.

"There was a Hindu monastery in a certain village. The monks of the monastery went out every day with begging-bowls to gather food. One day a monk, passing by, saw a Zemindar severely beating a poor man. The holy man, being very kindhearted, entreated the Zemindar to stop beating the man. The Zemindar, blind with rage, immediately turned on the monk and poured upon him the venom of his anger. He beat him until he was knocked unconscious on the ground. Another man, seeing his condition, went to the monastery and told what had happened. His brother monks ran to the spot where the holy man was lying. They lifted him and brought him to the monastery and laid him in a room; but the holy man still remained unconscious. His brothers fanned him, bathed his face, put milk into his mouth, and tried to nurse him back to life. Gradually they brought him back to consciousness. The holy man opened his eyes and looked at his fellow brethren. One of them, desiring to know whether he could recognize his friends, asked him in a loud voice: 'Maharaj, dost thou recognize him who is feeding thee with milk?' The holy man an-

swered in a feeble voice: 'Brother, he who beat me is now feeding me.'" [1]

During the Indian Mutiny the British troops sacked a town in which dwelt a sannyasi who for years had maintained the vow of silence. In the madness of battle the English soldier who came upon him did not stop to distinguish between this innocent and revered ascetic and the rebellious sepoys, so pierced his heart with the bayonet. As the cold steel entered his quivering flesh the old saint broke his silence of half a lifetime to say to his murderer, "And thou also art divine." [2]

In his training of the soul the sannyasi often makes use of asceticism. Asceticism is a subject upon which the Western world, and particularly the Protestant Western world, has made up its mind very definitely, and concerning which it is ready to say the last word, with the glib certainty that usually accompanies "snap judgments." If you want to know the value of asceticism the modern West will tell you that it is all foolishness; — and it knows because it has never tried it. The East has tried it and it does not think it all foolishness; and there was a time when the West agreed with the East. No one can deny that there is a kind of asceticism which is worse than folly, a self-torture which is madness and sin; but there are degrees of deliberate and arbitrary self-denial which some of the wisest men of all ages have found of no little help in the struggle of the spirit to free itself from the lesser goods of this distracting world. This was a secret known to the Protestant Puritan no less than to the Catholic monk. As a French writer has put it, "Who says ascetic says athlete." It is in this sense that the ideal sannyasi makes use of ascetic practices. He would be an athlete of the spirit, and with this great end in view he cuts all the ties that bind his progress and deliberately denies himself and crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts.

The more earnest sannyasins use other means still for attaining the desired end. Some make use of psycho-physical methods, known as "yoga," devised these many centuries back for the purpose of attaining the desired mental state in which the One Self is realized. This "superconscious state," as they call

[1] *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*, pp. 88–89.

[2] A story quoted in several places by Sister Nivedita from Vivekananda.

it, is known as "samadhi," and those who have attained to it assure us on their return that in it they have perceived that subject and object are one and that all multiplicity is illusion. With many yogins this trance state is a kind of self-hypnosis — a species of indulgence; with others it comes spontaneously. With the more spiritual it is a truly religious experience; being in fact the same thing as the trances of the mediæval Christian mystics. Ramakrishna, who often experienced it, speaks of it and its attainment thus: —

"Divine Love is the rarest thing in the world. He who can love God as a devoted wife loves her husband attains to Divine Love. Pure Love is difficult to acquire. In pure love the whole heart and soul must be absorbed in God. Then will come ecstasy. In ecstasy a man remains dumb with wonder, outward breathing stops entirely, but inward breathing continues; as when aiming a gun, a man remains speechless and without breathing. In Divine Love one entirely forgets the external world with all its charms and attractions; even one's own body which is so dear to one is easily forgotten. In ecstasy, when the breathing stops, the whole mind remains absolutely fixed upon the Supreme. All nerve currents run upward with tremendous force, and the result is samadhi or God-consciousness." [1]

It is, of course, only the greater saints — the "Paramahamsas" or "Mahatmans" as the Hindus call them — who attain to this supreme experience. But though sainthood is not common, even in India, there are a few in almost every generation upon whom this glorious title is by common consent conferred. Max Müller [2] (relying chiefly on Keshub Chunder Sen) mentions six contemporaries of his who were commonly regarded in India as "Mahatmans" or "Paramahamsas." One of these was, of course, Ramakrishna, whom I have so often mentioned, and whose disciples describe the Indian ideal of sainthood in the following words: —

"A real Mahatman as described in the Bhagavad Gita (chapter VII, verse 19) is one who, having realized the Absolute, perceives the Divine Being in all animate and inanimate objects of the universe. His heart and soul never turn away from

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 74–75.
[2] *Ramakrishna; His Life and Sayings*, pp. 12, 23.

God. He lives in God-consciousness, and Divine qualities constantly flow through his soul. He cares neither for fame nor power nor worldly prosperity. A true Mahatman has no attachment to His body or to sense pleasures; He is a living God; He is absolutely free and His inner nature is illumined by the self-effulgent light of Divine Wisdom and His heart is overflowing with Divine Love. His soul becomes the playground of the Almighty, His body and mind become the instrument of the Divine Will. And Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was such a real Mahatman." [1]

Another of these recent Mahatmans was Devendranath Tagore, of whom Mr. Shastri writes as follows: "His nature was essentially spiritual. Communion with the Supreme was the key to his whole being; he lived in that atmosphere; he saw life from that standpoint; he drew all his inspiration of duty from it, and cherished it above all earthly possessions. . . . In spite of his real sainthood he never put on the garb or habit of a sadhu or saint. His piety was natural, habitual, modest. He hated and shunned all display of saintliness. His piety was best manifested in an habitual sense of Divine presence, in strict moral integrity, and in the punctual performance of even the minutest duties of domestic and social life. Though shunning mendicancy, he was not less devoted to his religious exercises than any mendicant. Habitual communion with God was his daily practice. Every morning his first duty was to chant passages from the Vedas and Upanishads and to give some time in thanksgiving and prayer. He would spend days and months on hilltops and other solitary places in earnest meditation, either communing with the Supreme Spirit or feeding his spiritual nature with the study of the teachings of great spiritual masters."

Though Devendranath Tagore had his trials and at times was subject to sharp criticism from former friends for doing what seemed to him his duty, — and a painful duty it sometimes was, — the sweetness and light which seem to have been his abiding characteristic did not desert him. "He never descended to the level of his critics or maligners; but calmly bore all and viewed all questions from a spiritual standpoint. . . .

[1] *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*, pp. 5–6.

What people said about him was of secondary importance to him; what he really was he thought to be his prime concern. Therein lay his strength and his repose. That calm and undisturbed sincerity of mind he maintained in the midst of all vicissitudes of life. He was a true and living embodiment of that teaching of the Gita where it is said: 'A truly wise man is never buffeted by his trials and tribulations, does not covet pleasures, and is free from attachment, fear, and anger.'" [1]

Some of these "great souls" of India find the joy of the Lord so intense that they quite forget the needs of their fellows. They say but little about their own supreme experiences, for they have reached the great silence. In others, as the above quotations suggest, divine love so fills the heart that it overflows on those around. Says Ramakrishna: —

"The bee buzzes so long as it is outside the lotus and does not settle down in its heart to drink of its honey. As soon as it tastes of the honey all buzzing is at an end. Similarly all noise of discussion ceases when the soul of the neophyte begins to drink the nectar of Divine Love in the Lotus Feet of the Almighty. Sometimes, however, the bee after being intoxicated by the honey makes a sweet humming sound. So the God-intoxicated soul sometimes speaks for the good of others." [2]

Samadhi is a goal seldom reached or even striven for to-day; in fact it has never been common and goeth not forth save by fasting and prayer. But the chief exercise of the earnest sannyasi is meditation. Doubtless for the great majority of India's "holy men" to-day meditation means merely a kind of lazy day-dreaming; yet there are still some, perhaps many, to whom meditation means a state of the most intense absorption, the depth of which we Westerners can hardly conceive. It is related of Swami Vivekananda that he sometimes became so lost in thought that his body would be black with mosquitoes without any consciousness on his part of the fact; and in this he is only representative of the sannyasi tradition which has had innumerable examples through the ages. And of course it goes without saying that the strictest morality is an absolute condi-

[1] Shivanath Shastri, *History of the Brahmo Samaj*, pp. 191, 194, 195, 198, 199.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

tion for him who would attain to the highest goal.[1] In short, the sannyasi must live not only the simple but also the strenuous life. The yellow robe if worn worthily is no garb for the lazy man.

"He who has not first renounced evil ways, nor is subdued, nor tranquil, and whose mind is not at rest, even by knowledge he can never obtain the Self." [2] "Nor is the Atman [the Self] obtained by the strengthless, nor without earnestness and right meditation. But if a wise man strives after it by these means, then his self enters the home of Brahman." [3]

There are not many sannyasins to-day who have attained to the ancient ideal; but there are many more than the superficial tourist would suppose who strive after the goal and to some extent approximate it. From Swami Dayanand's "Autobiography" one gets a picture of what one might call the underground religious life of India fifty years ago, a religious life which, though it has lost in extent and intensity since his time, is still a large factor in the India of to-day. In that book we see sannyasins of the old type hurrying from one end of India to the other in order to visit some sacred spot or hear the words of some famous teacher; sannyasins on the mountains, sannyasins in the jungle, sannyasins wandering on the banks of the Ganges, reading the Vedas and Puranas, practicing austerities, arguing with each other over the teachings of the sages and the meaning of the scriptures, or seeking in solitude to realize the truth of their own inherent divinity.

Nearly all sannyasins to-day belong to some of the monastic orders. Of these there are many, the most important of which were founded by Shankara, or by Ramanuja or one of his fol-

[1] One should, however, note that the idea of antinomianism has met with considerable acceptance in India and is taught in some of the sacred books. The man who knows Brahman need not trouble himself with moral questions, being beyond them. "The great unborn Self," says the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, "does not become greater by good works nor smaller by evil works." (IV, 4, 22.) "According to human knowledge," says the Mahanirvana Tantra, "the world appears to be both pure and impure, but when Brahman-knowledge has been acquired there is no distinction between pure and impure. For him who knows that Brahman is in all things and eternal, what is there that can be impure?" (IV, 22–23.)

[2] Katha Upanishad, I, II, 24.

[3] Mundakya Upanishad, III, II, 4.

lowers. Most of these orders, even those founded by Shankara, are sectarian, — the Shankara ones usually recognizing Shiva as the chief manifestation of the impersonal Absolute, while those deriving from Ramanuja pay their devotion to Vishnu in one of his incarnations. These sannyasi orders as a rule require their members to take five vows which have been handed down through centuries of tradition as characteristic of the yellow robe. The first of these is the vow of *ahimsa* or harmlessness. It corresponds to the Sixth Commandment of the Mosaic code, but is of much wider extent, including within its shelter every form of sentient life. The Hindu monk *must not kill;* for all living beings are bound together in the chain of transmigration and by the common aim of liberation; and the feeling of universal sympathy which the sannyasi seeks to cultivate makes him regard the taking of animal life as almost equivalent to the murder of a little brother. For this reason also the sannyasi must not make use of animal food; to do so would seem to him a form of cannibalism. The second vow of the sannyasi is against lying, the third against stealing, the fourth against unchastity (the sannyasi must lead the celibate life), while the fifth vow pledges him to liberality.[1]

I made a point, while in Benares, of visiting several monasteries of these Hindu orders. In plan they resemble to some extent the monasteries of Christian Europe, though as a rule they are much simpler and rather less beautiful. One of the finer examples that I visited was said to be over four hundred years old, and was hidden away behind two small Shiva temples, and approached by a narrow lane and a flight of steps. After taking various turns one at last goes through a gateway and finds one's self in a square court, resembling an Italian cloister. In the center of the court stands a large cassia tree, several banana trees, and a small platform with the base of a lingam, a Nandi bull, and a few fresh flowers. A number of small rooms open out of the cloister, but most of the cells of the sannyasins are on the second and third floors, and open upon galleries looking down into the court. I went into a number of these rooms and found them simple to the verge of barrenness: — the

[1] The first four of these vows (as we shall see later) are shared by the Jaina and the Buddhist. In the fifth vow the three religions differ.

bed a panther's skin or straw mat lying on the cement floor, a bulge in the cement serving for pillow, a few Sanskrit books (two or three), and nothing more.

The sannyasins in this monastery are Sanskrit scholars, and the abbot of another monastery which I visited the same morning is a very learned, as well as pious, man; and both he and his juniors make use of their learning in teaching Sanskrit to a class of boys and expounding the Vedanta philosophy to older students. These monks belonged to one of the Shankara orders, but I found much the same condition in a monastery of Ramanand's order, where the monks not only read from the Gita, the Brahma Sutras, and the Commentaries of Ramanuja, but teach a class of little boys. The older of these sannyasins had a rather fine face and a decidedly pleasing personality. He told me he had belonged to the order about ten years, and had joined it because he wanted to die in Benares. He had left his wife in care of a grown-up son, and had given him plenty of land, so felt no scruple in renouncing the life of the householder. He felt sure this was his last incarnation, and at death he expected to go direct to the heaven of Rama for all eternity. For Rama, he said, was the One God, and was the same as the God of the Moslems and the God of the Christians — Vishnu, Shiva, etc., being merely other names for the One Deity.

A less scholarly, but in some respects a more interesting, group of monks I came upon in a Shankara monastery, which I was fortunate enough to visit in company with the Reverend J. J. Johnson — one of the most learned men in India, whose knowledge of Sanskrit and of Indian thought has won for him from all the Hindus of the United Provinces the title "Pundit Johnson." There was no one in the court of the monastery as we entered, and no one in the small Shiva temple that occupied the center of it — no one, that is, save the faithful stone Nandi, kneeling in eternal contemplation and reverence before the lingam of the "Great God." Soon, however, one of the sannyasins climbed the flight of steps and made his appearance in the court. He was dressed in the usual costume of Shankara's monastic orders — a yellow cloth or skirt tied around the waist and extending to the knees, another yellow cloth — a kind of toga — thrown over the shoulder and extending to the

feet, and a yellow muffler wrapped around the throat. He was just returning from his morning bath in the Ganges, and he carried in one hand a bamboo staff with a yellow bag [1] tied on its upper end, and in the other hand an earthen water jar. The jar might have been of wood, but not of brass, as members of this order must not touch metal. Money also they must not touch in any form, nor women, nor fire. The simple clothes I have described, the staff, and two or three earthen or wooden jars and a rosary of nuts or dried berries are the only possessions of these sannyasins. They are permitted to own books, but the members of this particular monastery have no scholarly inclinations, and prefer "meditation" to study. They will accept no members from the Shudra caste, and as a matter of fact are nearly all Brahmins.

At Mr. Johnson's request, our new acquaintance described for us his daily life. He rises between four and five, brushes his teeth, does puja at the shrine, goes to the Ganges for his bath, and stays on the ghats or near the Golden Temple till eleven or after. Then he returns to the monastery and in his cell meditates upon the mantra given him by his guru at initiation. About twelve-thirty, he goes out to a Brahmin house where he is known and there eats his first and only meal of the day, consisting chiefly of *dhal* (a kind of pulse), rice, and vegetables. His dinner finished, he returns to the monastery and spends the afternoon saying prayers with his rosary and meditating on his mantra and other religious subjects. If he has any real errand during the afternoon he goes upon it; otherwise he remains in the monastery the rest of the day. He goes to bed at nine.

After finishing this account of the day's work, our friend pointed to his staff and said, "That is Mahadev," and to his bowl and said, "That is Brahma." This seemed a bit surprising, and Mr. Johnson remonstrated: "How can that be Brahma? It has not four heads, nor four arms. It is not God, it is just a bowl." To this the sannyasi answered: "Brahma dwells in it temporarily. But name and form pass," — and so saying he

[1] In this bag is carried the triple cord of the twice-born which is discarded when one becomes a sannyasi. The monk described above is an *Ekadandi*, i.e., he belongs to one of Shankara's orders and carries a *single rod*. Ramanuja's monks carry triple rods.

seized the bowl (he had only one other) and dashed it upon the stone platform of the temple. "See!" he said; "its form is gone, and with that its name: — it is no more a bowl, but a thousand worthless pieces. So the form of the Great Moguls is gone and their name is going. Name and form pass, but the Eternal abides." And so saying our friend climbed the stairs to his cell to meditate on his mantra.

Another sannyasi now returned from the ghats — a pleasant old man with a good face all wrinkled from smiling. He said he was sixty years old and a great-grandfather. Mr. Johnson and he soon got into a discussion on the Vedanta philosophy, and in the midst of it a voice was heard from the upper gallery taking part in the conversation. It was our first friend who was in his room meditating on his mantra. Presently he rushed downstairs, — this time dressed only in his loin-cloth, — eager to defend the doctrine of Maya against Mr. Johnson's attacks, and his excited defense of the illusory nature of everything finite continued till two more monks entered the court, whereupon he withdrew again to his cell and his mantra.

The two newcomers were unusually simple men and were induced to tell us (contrary to the custom of most sannyasins) why they had taken up the religious life. One of them said he had become a sannyasi because his wife was dead and he had no children and was lonesome. The other had turned monk because his wife was a scold. His brother had died and he had taken his brother's child home to live, whereupon his wife got particularly angry and refused to cook. At last things came to such a pass that he said to her: "Very well; then I will go to Benares and enter the religious life!" To which the lady responded that if he felt that way about it he had better go; so he went. It seems probable that if other sannyasins would talk as freely we should find that most of them enter the religious life for equally sensible reasons. The truth is, many of these Hindu monasteries are Homes for the Aged. They fill exactly the same place in the Hindu economy which with us is held by our Homes for Old Men.

While our conversation with these two monks was in progress our first friend appeared again, this time fully dressed in his yellow robes, all of them carefully adjusted, his entire forehead

and the upper part of his cheeks religiously streaked with the gray marks of Shiva, made from the ashes of the sacred cow-dung, and armed to the teeth with staff and bowl — in short, very obviously dressed in his best and with an air that showed he regarded his appearance as, on the whole, rather natty. He was on his way out to pay his one daily call and beg his one daily meal; — in short, he was going out to dinner!

The majority of the sannyasins within the various recognized and better orders are at least harmless old men, who, though not very useful to society, live simple and retired lives; while some of them are useful as teachers and as real scholars and thinkers. But outside of these orders are hundreds of thousands of self-styled "holy men" who have taken up holiness as a business, and live on the reputation established in previous centuries by genuine "renouncers." The external appearance and the public bearing of their prototype is carefully mimicked by these self-styled "sadhus" — these "good men"; his simple fare is ostentatiously simplified, and his costume and accoutrements imitated and exaggerated. The old sannyasi let his hair grow long and become matted because he had no time to think of his appearance. His spurious imitator has no time to think of anything else, and wears on his head mingled with his hair huge masses of matted rope. According to Govinda Das, "The number of sadhus returned by the census of 1901 is fifty-two lakhs (5,200,000). Every fellow who is too worthless to be a good citizen shirks his civil duties and forthwith dons the ochre-colored robe, thus becoming *mukta* ('free') — free to live in luxury and vice at the expense of his better but more credulous fellow citizens." [1]

These religious beggars and pseudo-ascetics are for the tourist the most patent and blatant fact in Hinduism. The show places of India are full of them. I remember one in Benares who spends his time running about the ghats in search of tourists, carrying a long trumpet which he sounds before him (as was the custom with his spiritual relatives in Jerusalem nineteen hundred years ago) to attract attention, and dogging the steps of every European he can find till the usual *baksheesh* is forthcoming. A few years ago a genuine ascetic died — a really

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 178.

good man I am told — who for years had spent many hours of each day on the Benares ghats stretched upon a bed of spikes. In imitation of his example, but with a very different spirit, a professional holy man, who is not in business for his health, has had a bed of spikes made and sits upon it often enough to make a living. I went to see him twice — his headquarters is above the Pachganga Ghat near the mosque of Aurungzeb — and both times I had to send for him to come and sit down on his spikes; for which he knew perfectly well he would receive a consideration.

This extreme commercializing of holiness is, of course, in part a modern phenomenon; but it had its beginnings centuries back; and thoughtful Hindus have long realized that many of their "holy men" laid an extreme emphasis on external observances and showy asceticism, thus keeping the outside of the platter clean and doing nothing toward that training and development of their souls which alone was worthy of the reverence they sought to win. The Garuda Purana itself — which in other sections values certain external observances so highly — has nothing but contempt for those ascetics (of whom already in its day there seem to have been great numbers) who seek to impress the public by their appearance, and regard spiritual salvation as something to be won by purely external methods. The passage (which is too good to leave unquoted) reads like a page from a modern missionary indictment of Hinduism: —

"The fools desire to obtain the Invisible by single meals, fasts, and other restraints, and by the emaciation of the body. The hypocrites putting on appearances, and wearing quantities of matted hair and using antelope skins, wander about and deceive the people. Donkeys walk among people quite naked and unashamed. Are these free from attachment? If men are to be liberated by earth, ashes, and dust, does the dog which always lives among earth and ashes become liberated? The jackals, rats, deer, and other beasts which feed upon grass, leaves, and water, and always live in forests — do these become ascetics? The crocodiles and fish which from birth to death dwell in the waters of the Ganges — do these become Yogins?" [1]

[1] XVI, 61, 62, 65-68.

As this passage shows, we outsiders are not the only ones who realize how deeply the Indian ideal has been degraded. None of us, in fact, realize it so fully — and so sadly — as do the more thoughtful Hindus themselves. One of them said to me: "The noble ancient ideal of the sannyasi, whose very presence should disseminate goodness and blessing wherever he went, is now nearly lost, and instead of this fine and reverent figure we have the professional beggar. As the human corpse is the vilest of corpses just because man is the highest of earth's beings, so the degradation of this old and noble type is probably the lowest thing in Indian society. In it, as in so many other things, we Hindus have turned to a worshiping of the dead corpses of rites and ceremonies and mere externals."

For it is not merely the ascetic ideal but the whole of Hinduism that is in a decline. "That Hinduism has become diseased to its very core is a fact admitted by all Hindus, irrespective of their special creed or caste." [1] Many of those who cling to the forms of their religion have forgotten that the forms have a meaning, and many of those who are dissatisfied with meaningless forms have given them up and got nothing new to fill their place. A Hindu friend tells me that in probably eighty per cent of the homes in the United Provinces into which Western influence has entered the old religious services are no longer observed. Another Hindu whom I met — a man known all over India for his learning — said to me: "There has been a decided falling-off in religious belief and practice throughout India in these last few years. In Benares, to be sure, there is still a good deal of zeal in the temple worship, but this is not the case in most other places. In Bengal the temples are pretty well deserted. Especially is this loss of interest in religion true of the more thoughtful people and of the young men. Many of them are beginning to feel that the forms of Hinduism were proper and fitting centuries ago, but that they no longer suit the times and the needs of the people, and no longer express their real beliefs. A few are even saying that religion is harmful. Many more continue the old practices, but only to keep up their social position as devout and conservative Brahmins. Thus many people go on pilgrimages to Benares and other places and

[1] Govinda Das, *op. cit.*, p. vi.

go through the prescribed actions, but with no real belief in their efficacy, and merely as traditional or pleasant or socially profitable performances."

Perhaps the saddest part of this whole process of degeneration is to be found not in the loss of belief, not in the meaningless forms, not even in the immoralities and obscenities connected with some of the sects, but in the hypocrisy and sham inevitably bred when an orthodox but unspiritual conservatism meets an increasing but cowardly intelligence. There are thousands of keen-witted and well-informed Brahmins throughout India who see as clearly as any of us the absurdities of the popular idol puja and the harmful and immoral influence of many of the common rites and superstitions, who not merely refrain from opposing these things, but take active part in them, sometimes because they find it profitable to do so, more often because they wish to avoid the social inconvenience that would follow a sincere declaration of their real views. I met one of these men at the great Shiva procession in Madura, with forehead profusely daubed with sacred signs in the sacred cow-dung, and asked him what he thought of the performance. At first he gave me an elaborate defense of Hindu idolatry and cult; but when I pressed him he admitted that he considered the whole thing not only silly but harmful. And when I asked why, then, he participated in it, he said frankly it was because he feared social disapproval if he gave it up. One wonders how these men, any more than the augurs of Cicero's time, can look each other in the face without laughing.

But it would be unfair to judge Hinduism by its external and degraded forms [1] — forms which those who believe most profoundly in the essence of Hinduism are the first to deplore. To gain an understanding of Christianity we should hardly send

[1] This is done not uncommonly by those who have seen the unfortunate results of the attempts of certain swamis to disseminate a pseudo-Hinduism — or a certain part of Hinduism — in the West, and who feel moved to show up a side of Hinduism which the swamis' disciples are not likely to hear mentioned. An example of this rather unjust presentation of Hinduism in order to protect foolish American women from its worst sides is to be found in Elizabeth A. Reed's recent book *Hinduism in Europe and America* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914). No doubt nearly all the assertions in the book are true, yet as a presentation of Hinduism it is almost as misleading as is that of the swamis themselves.

one to the degenerate monasteries of South America nor to the skeptics of modern Germany. And to understand Hinduism, not as it is practiced by the majority, but as it is conceived — and loved — by its best representatives, we must consider its more ideal aspect. A bird's-eye view, so to speak, of this more ideal side of Hinduism — the Hinduism which the intelligent Hindu wishes to defend — may therefore serve as a suitable close to this chapter.

And in no religion is a bird's-eye view more important — or more difficult. Here more than anywhere else in the whole sphere of historical religions are we in danger of missing the forest for the trees. To see what Hinduism really means, what with all its strange forms and contradictory beliefs it really is about, we must get hold of its central concept and cling firmly to that as our guide and interpreter. This central concept of Hinduism, unless I am greatly mistaken, is the *soul.* It is around this that all its fantastic forms and varied beliefs, its profound philosophies and its blind superstitions, center, and from it alone that they can be grasped as a whole and understood. If, putting aside for a time our criticisms, we look back with a sympathetic and understanding mind at Hinduism as a whole from this point of view, we shall bear away with us a general impression which will enable us to comprehend to some extent the attitude and feeling of the devout Hindu toward his venerable religion. Sharing his beliefs, then, for the moment, we shall see in Hinduism a system revealed to the Rishis, and by the Rishis to the race, before the dawn of history; a system which is nothing less than the *universal Dharma,* the Way of Life for all sentient beings. We shall see the One Absolute Spirit becoming many, as the fire sends forth sparks, or as mists arise from the sea. Thus at a million million points spirit invades matter, which itself in fact is but a manifestation of the Eternal Spirit. These various offshoots of the Divine, these eternal souls, we shall see (if for the time we become good Hindus), through varied and sinuous courses ever striving backward toward their source, ever seeking God who is their home. Up from the lowest forms of life, through animal, human, and divine, with varying degrees of ignorance and insight, they make their way, but ever with the one conscious aim.

Among the animal forms this aim is quite inarticulate. With man it becomes more definite; but with him it assumes many forms in the different stages of his development. Some worship the Divine disguised and hidden in idols of wood and stone; some image It as an invisible but anthropomorphic Being above the clouds; a few understand that the Eternal is in our hearts, closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet, and realize that there are not many separate selves but only one Self, and that in Him all beings, human, animal, and divine, are eternally united. And in the end all must and all shall learn this lesson.

The very structure of human society, in so far as it embodies the ideal of the Rishis as laid down in the ancient Shastras, reflects this one great purpose — the education of the soul. All are brothers, but some are younger and some older. All have work to do, but the work of each is adapted to his ability. The younger brothers in the World's great family, — the lower classes in the World's great school — have the duties of lowly service, corresponding to their undeveloped natures. Above these stand the souls whose past experience in previous incarnations enables them to undertake the larger responsibilities of the community. And in the highest human class are those who through hundreds of faithful lives have purified their souls by knowledge and devotion, and have thus attained to deeper insight and to greater ability to lead their fellows in the life of the spirit.

And the life of the individual in its turn, as seen by the devout Hindu, should be and may be — and if it follow the Dharma it must be — a microcosm of society and of the Universe, and embody the same great purpose as they. Its first stage should be devoted to mastering the knowledge which is the spiritual heritage of the race, its second to productive service, its third to wise and unselfish guidance of the younger generation, while in his last few years the old man wanders out by himself, alone with God, to complete his liberation from the flesh, and to realize to the full his essential unity with the Divine. The ideal of the sannyasi is thus the crown of Hindu life. His departure from home to the homeless state is the soul's Declaration of Independence. And throughout the centuries

of India's great Past, and even to-day, the sannyasi has been and still is an unfailing reminder that poverty is not disgrace, and a living protest against materialism and against the soul's bondage to things.

This is what Hinduism means to the devout and intelligent Hindu. To him the life of the individual, the structure of society, the whole of human history, the entire cosmic process present themselves as aspects and phases of the one universal purpose, the training and education of the soul in its long pilgrimage from the layer of the brute up to the steps of the Throne of God.

CHAPTER IX

REFORM MOVEMENTS WITHIN HINDUISM

EVER since the West came to India it has been reforming it. The missionaries have been reforming its religion and the British Government its politics, and both have been seeking in more or less direct fashion to reform its social customs. But it would be unfair to India to suppose (and I suspect the supposition is not uncommon) that in all this reforming movement India itself is quite passive and simply waits for others to operate upon it — like a man in the dentist's chair or a patient under ether. There have always been native reformers in India, men who saw the need of religious and social changes and who have sought to start new movements in the right direction. Before India's contact with the West these movements were, indeed, primarily religious (though of course religious reforms often involve social ones); but since Western education and ideals got a footing in the land both religious and social reform movements among the Indians have not been uncommon. In the last few years especially, non-sectarian efforts for educational and charitable purposes and for the reform of social abuses have been taken up by a goodly number of educated Indians; and a word or two about some typical movements of this sort should be said before we go on to consider the more purely religious reforms that have sprung up within Hinduism.

The fact that most of these efforts at social reform have originated only in the last few years is itself significant. For there can be little doubt that the desire for the unselfish service of others which is now spreading among the Indians came chiefly, though indirectly, from Christianity and from the example of Christian missionaries. The desire to "acquire merit" and to save one's own soul has lain so heavily upon Hinduism (as, indeed, it did upon much of monkish and mediæval Christianity) that it seems to have been very difficult for the idea of purely objective service without thought of reward to take root. "It

may seem a paradox," writes the editor of the "Indian Interpreter," [1] "and yet it is true that the very occupation of the [Hindu] religion with the desire to get rid of the self has made it selfish. The individual soul and its fortunes form to it the first reality. The ancient saints of India seem never able altogether to forget themselves, they are so absorbed in the endeavor, never accomplished, to escape from themselves. We cannot imagine them saying like Wilberforce, when a lady reproached him for neglecting in his concern for the slaves the needs of his own soul, — 'Madam, I had almost forgotten that I had a soul.'" It was only after the Indians had seen the example of the Christian missionary that this great idea of purely selfless service for its own sake — this objective frame of mind — dawned upon any considerable number of them. To their credit be it said, however, that once this idea was presented to them in the bodily form of unselfish Christian lives, it made a strong appeal and has been adopted eagerly and put into practice by leading Indians of every religion.

It is no part of my purpose to give even a list of the various native organizations and institutions in which this new desire for helpfulness is expressing itself. Instead I shall give merely a few examples, taken almost at random, as illustrations of the sort of thing that is going on in many parts of India. Perhaps the most remarkable of these organizations is the "Servants of India Society": for it has chosen as its province nothing less than the alleviation of every kind of suffering, the attack upon every kind of wrong. It was founded in 1905 by Mr. G. K. Gokhale,[2] an Indian gentleman whom India rightly regards as a truly great man. Mr. Gokhale had seen the power that the new idea of service was gaining in India and he recognized the fact that without wise guidance it would be wasted. He therefore conceived of an institution composed of a few experienced and devoted workers who should hold themselves in readiness to respond to every call in the service of India, initiate reforms, lend advice, and organize new centers of work, and also give to

[1] October, 1913, p. 99.

[2] Mr. Gokhale died on February 19, 1915, and his loss was regarded as a national calamity in all parts of India. The Servants of India Society is being continued, however, with the Hon. V. S. Srinavasa Sastry as President.

promising young men a systematic modern training in social service which should turn them out into the great field not merely enthusiasts but experts. Only the devoted may join this band. All who enter it must recognize the service of their country as their supreme end in life; to this service they must give their entire time and strength, earning no money for themselves, but content to live upon what little the Society can afford them for support; and they must promise "to regard all Indians as brothers and to work for their advancement without distinction of caste or creed." The Society has at present twenty-five members. They come from various provinces and from various castes. They all are Hindus but one, who is a Mohammedan. At their headquarters in Poona they have a school in which each of the new "Servants" is required to spend four months in study during each of the first five years of his membership.

The work of the "Servants of India" is as wide as is India's social need. A bare list of their activities would cover pages: including such things as the formation of elementary educational leagues; the promotion of female education by founding schools for girls and the building-up through the press of a sane public opinion on this and other subjects; the initiation of agricultural improvements and the instruction of the small farmer; the sanitation of villages; the founding of various coöperative societies particularly among the lowest classes — including millhands and the despised Sweeper Caste; the purifying of public festivals from various traditional indecencies, and the substitution for these of healthy entertainments; the provision of popular instructive lectures and traveling libraries, and classes where men and women may learn the elements of hygiene and sanitation; instruction of the masses in the value of inoculation against the plague; plague relief; famine relief, etc. As I have said, there are but twenty-five members in the Society as yet; but every one of them is a center for many workers, whose enthusiasm he rouses, and whose activity he organizes and directs. One of the chief efforts of the Society is the foundation of new institutions or committees all over India for the accomplishment of particular ends — organizations which thereafter become independent and self-supporting.

Partly as a result of the efforts of these Servants of India, partly from the work of other servants who do not belong to Mr. Gokhale's society, the number of organizations for social service throughout India is rapidly growing. The names of a few will indicate the kind of work they are doing: The Deccan Educational League, the Society for the Protection of Children, the Social Service League, the Seva Sadan (for the rescue and education of women), the National Social Conference, the Social Reform Association, the Plague Relief Committee, the Central Famine Relief Committee, various local temperance associations, the Annual Temperance Conference, the Indian Ladies' Conference, the fifty Hindu and the forty-one Moslem orphanages, etc. Mention should also be made of the periodicals of reform which have sprung up in recent years, the most important of which is the "Indian Social Reformer of Bombay," now completing its twenty-fifth year, while the two youngest are the "Social Reform Advocate" of Madras, founded in December, 1914, and the Bombay "Social Service Quarterly," started in June, 1915. These papers exert a real and beneficent influence in many parts of the peninsula.

Besides these educational and charitable organizations I should mention the attack which Indian reformers are making on certain crying evils peculiar to India and due to her social structure and her traditions. The most important and fundamental of these evils is the caste system. And against this the present war is proving itself an ally and friend of India. The thousands of brave soldiers who have crossed the seas to fight for the King-Emperor have thereby broken caste, but it is unthinkable that they will be "outcasted" for it. These soldiers, moreover, are from many different castes, and in the trenches of France and Flanders they have learned to live on terms of closest intimacy, — a lesson which they are not likely completely to forget on their return to India. But peace as well as war works for reform, and the greatest foe of the caste system is modern life itself. Only India would have tolerated the irrational and self-imposed restrictions of caste as long as it has, and India is beginning to grow tired of them. The chief upholders of the system have always been the Brahmins; but today the Brahmins, being the most intelligent class in India,

find caste restrictions particularly galling. As a result many of them are beginning to break caste whenever they feel secure in not being found out. A most enthusiastic Bengalee Brahmin whom I met upon a train stopped, in the course of a scholarly exposition of the Bhagavad Gita, to quench his thirst with a bottle of soda-water which I had seen him purchase of a low-caste dealer in the last station. I asked him how he reconciled this with the strong belief he had expressed in the good old customs of his country. "You see," he answered, "there are no other Brahmins about!"

But while the lesser evils of caste — such as the prohibition against leaving India and against dining with Europeans — are bound to fall of their own weight, the same is not true of many of the absurd divisions that the caste system brings into Indian society, and especially of the cruel wrongs perpetrated in its name upon the millions who stand below the Shudras in the social scale. Fortunately some of the more liberal-minded Indians are making a brave attempt to face these evils and to rouse public sentiment against them.

Attacks of a mild nature have been made upon the system for many centuries. The Buddhists, Jainas, and Sikhs in the days of their founders all to some extent opposed caste. But caste reform by these bodies was for centuries discontinued and is only now showing signs of renewal. At present the oldest institution that is really attacking the caste system is the Brahmo Samaj — of which more farther on. The Arya Samaj neither accepts caste as it is nor has altogether broken with it; it opposes caste in a mild way, but does not (as does the Brahmo Samaj) insist upon its members giving up their caste. Beside these there are a few local organizations which aim to attack the system either directly or indirectly. One of the most important is the "Aryan Brotherhood" of Bombay, which was established in 1909 with the express purpose of rousing public sentiment against caste restrictions. It admits to its membership men of every caste and no caste, and constantly advocates the disregard of caste rules and the spread of enlightenment on the subject. The society has attractive club-rooms in which men of various castes meet. Occasionally a dinner is held at which all the members dine together — a shocking thing in

India! — and the names of those present are published. This is done as a deliberate challenge to the castes — for in Bombay the conservative upholders of the old rules are not so belligerent as they are in smaller and less enlightened centers. If the members of the Society simply dined together the castes would take no notice of it, even if the names of those present happened to be known. But when the names are published the castes cannot ignore it and have to take action, attempting to force their members to go through purification ceremonies. Thus the battle is opened, and if the members have the moral courage to resist and defy their relatives, the caste rules are by so much brought into contempt. The members of the Aryan Brotherhood with whom I have talked are very sanguine as to the future. They expect that the movement they have started will spread to all the more enlightened parts of India and that before long all restrictions on communal eating will be given up among the intelligent.

But the cruelest results of the caste system have to do with the outcastes — the "depressed classes" as they are called, the scum of the earth, as they are regarded — too defiled to be allowed in any Hindu temple, too low for the love of God to reach. Something is being done for them at last. In fact, back in the days of Keshub Chunder Sen — in 1870 — the Brahmo Samaj began work for these fifty million "untouchables," and the Bombay branch of the Samaj — known as the Prarthna Samaj — has especially distinguished itself in its efforts for their uplifting. It was chiefly under its auspices and direction that "the Depressed Classes Mission Society of India" was started in 1906, of whose work Mr. Saint Nihal Singh could write as follows early in 1913: "During the seven years that have passed since its foundation this Society has spread its branches far and wide in various parts of the Peninsula, and has come to be regarded as unquestionably the best effort put forward by non-Christian India to create an interest in the welfare of the low-castes and improve their condition. Its activities are many-sided. The parent body, at Bombay, for instance, maintains several schools, a boarding-house, a bookbindery, a shoe factory, and a mission. The workers visit the homes of the poor pariahs and endeavor to persuade the parents to send

their children to school; attempt to teach them the necessity of cleanliness of body, clothes, and home; arrange for a doctor to visit those who are ill; nurse them in their homes free of charge, or help them to get into some charitable hospital; visit the tenements and conduct regular home classes for grown women, who are taught reading, writing, and sewing; and read from the Hindu Scriptures passages calculated to inspire them with higher ideals." [1]

The Arya Samaj has also done something for these "unapproachables." Recognizing the influence of traditional forms on the Indian mind, the Arya leaders have attempted to make the untouchables touchable by putting them through a traditional religious ceremony, shaving their heads in orthodox Hindu fashion, and endowing them with the sacred triple cord. Care is taken to use plenty of mantras at this service, and on its conclusion the Brahmin members of the Samaj accept sweetmeats from the formerly untouchable initiates, in token that their vileness is taken away. Some even go so far as to visit the homes of these newly consecrated Hindus and eat food cooked by their wives. "This was a bold step," says Mr. Singh, "and caused a great commotion at the time of its occurrence. [It was first tried in 1899.] But the Arya Samaj has persevered in its efforts in this direction, and during the last decade has uplifted thousands of people belonging to the depressed classes. The strange part of it is that it has come to pass that the orthodox Hindus in some localities are gradually ceasing to ill-treat the 'purified' *panchamas* [fifth caste men], but look on them as their brothers in the faith, and no longer regard them as 'untouchable.' The Samaj is supplementing this work by carrying on a propaganda to fit the lowly ones to occupy their new position in society by educating them. A school is maintained at Sialkote, where young 'unapproachable' boys are taught to be responsible men, and arrangements are being made to start other similar institutions." [2]

The Sikhs, the Moslems, the Deva Samaj, the Theosophical Society, and a few local Hindu societies are all doing something for the depressed classes, and their efforts are being seconded by

[1] "India's Untouchables," *Contemporary Review* for March, 1913, p. 381.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 382.

some of the more advanced native rulers, particularly by that most intelligent Maharaja, the Gaekwar of Baroda. With his usual wisdom he has realized that if the outcastes are to be respected they must first be made respectable; hence his efforts are directed chiefly to the education of these unfortunates, and he has covered Baroda with schools and academies for the exclusive use of the children of outcastes. But in spite of these admirable efforts of high-minded Indians in various localities, it still is true that in India as a whole the outcaste's best friend is the Christian missionary.

Another evil tradition to which the Indians are beginning to pay some attention (thanks again to Christian suggestions) is the custom of forbidding the remarriage of widows. This custom is particularly harmful and even cruel in India owing to the twofold fact that many of the widows are little girls, and that (thanks to the doctrine of Karma) they are often regarded as having been the cause of the premature death of their husbands, through some sin committed by them in a previous incarnation. There are said to be 23,000,000 widows in India, of whom 112,000 are under ten years of age. On the husband's death the little girl's head is shaved, her pretty adornments are broken, and she is devoted thereafter to a life of compulsory usefulness. No one will marry her and if she stays with her husband's family she must earn her keep. As a rule she has had but little education and therefore cannot go out into the world and earn her living as a teacher or as a nurse. Practically no other money-making occupations are open to women in India. There is thus little for her to look forward to and little to brighten her life. It is not surprising that the number of suicides among these women is always large.

Already sixty years ago a few very advanced Hindu gentlemen began to take steps for the mitigation of these evils. In 1856 the Government passed an Act legalizing the remarriage of widows, and "about 1870 an agitation was started in the Bombay Presidency for the purpose of rousing Hindus to such sympathy with widows as would make widow-marriage really possible in Hindu society." [1] In 1887 a Widows' Home was established near Calcutta, by a Hindu gentleman named

[1] Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 402.

Banerjea. Since then nearly a dozen "Homes" have been organized by Indians in various parts of the land, perhaps the most influential being the one established by Mr. Karve at Poona which in 1896 gave the impetus to the founding of the Hindu Widows' Home Association. The aim of this organization is to educate young widows and prepare them to become teachers, or nurses, and if possible to form from them "a class of Hindu sisters of charity and mercy." [1] A Widow Remarriage Association has also been formed which is receiving a good deal of encouragement and assistance.[2]

But there will continue to be millions of sad child-widows in India just so long as the custom of child marriage continues. This is the more fundamental evil of the two and from it not only child-widowhood but various other evils grow. There are 302,000 wives in India under six years of age, and 22,500,000 between five and ten. Most of these, of course, do not yet live with their husbands; but there are over 9,400,000 girls under sixteen who have entered the marriage state in the full sense of the word. Most girls are taken from school at ten to be married and thereafter receive no more education. Out of every hundred girls of school age, just four are in school. From this it may be imagined how fit they are to be intellectual comrades for their husbands (who, indeed, are sometimes fifteen, but sometimes fifty), or to fulfill the intellectual and moral requirements of motherhood and mould the minds of the next generation. It is said that about twenty-five per cent of Hindu women die prematurely through early marriages, and as many more become semi-invalids from the same cause.

The first attack against this and other evils connected with the Hindu family (including the prejudice against widow-remarriage) was made by Christian missionaries. But the Brahmo Samaj early took up the fight in very efficient fashion, and the Prarthna Samaj has also done its share. The Arya Samaj, too, has done something. In 1891 the Government raised the age of consent (in the provinces, not in the native states) from ten to twelve. But though cohabitation with a

[1] See Mr. Karve's article in the *Indian Interpreter* for October, 1913.

[2] *The Indian Social Reformer* for January 3, 1915, notes a gift to the Association of 30,000 rupees.

wife under twelve is now illegal, the law is very poorly enforced, its rigid enforcement being almost impossible without the backing of public opinion. A purely non-sectarian society, whose aim it is to rouse public opinion and raise still higher the marriage-age of girls, was organized in December, 1909, under the name the "Hindu Marriage Reform League." Its founder and first president was a Hindu and all its members are Hindus; but it should be added that the organization of the Society was largely due to two American ladies, one of whom (Miss Carrie A. Tennant) has devoted her entire time ever since to the organization of new local centers and to the rather difficult task of keeping up the enthusiasm of the members. The League has now ninety-eight branches (fifty-two for men, forty-six for women), all in flourishing condition. It maintains a library and free reading-room at Simla, and publishes a monthly journal in the interests of its great cause. It aims to induce as many young men as possible to take the vow not to marry girls under twelve years (preferably the girl should be at least sixteen), and to obtain from as many fathers as possible the promise not to give their daughters in marriage before they have reached that age. This they hope to do by means of constant agitation — working on public opinion through lectures, pamphlets, and, especially, through example. Ultimately they hope for a law forbidding the marriage of girls under sixteen.[1]

One more aim of the Hindu Marriage Reform League is to rouse public opinion against the present custom which requires the father of the prospective bride to give his future son-in-law a large dowry with his child. As the dowries required are exorbitant, and as it is almost impossible for a girl to find a husband without one, the problem has become very serious. Fathers are often financially crippled or ruined in order to avoid the disgrace of having a daughter still unmarried at fifteen or sixteen; and young men are practically *bought* as husbands — sold to the highest bidder. Both the Marriage Reform League and the

[1] Even conservative Hindus, though unprepared to go so far as the League, recognize some of the evils of early marriage and are willing that some change should be made in present customs. The 1915 Conference of the All India Orthodox Hindus, at Hardwar, "passed a resolution recommending the minimum marriageable age of boys to be fixed at 18 and that of girls at 8 years." (*The Indian Social Reformer* for May 9, 1915.)

Social Reform Association have been attacking this evil custom and their efforts have recently received notable reinforcement from a young girl in Calcutta, whose name will not soon be forgotten. Snehalata had reached the advanced age of fourteen, and was still unmarried. Her father had made every effort to collect enough money to buy a husband for her, but in vain — for the price demanded for a bridegroom was eight hundred rupees in cash and twelve hundred in jewelry. There was nothing left him but to mortgage the home. Snehalata determined to prevent this sacrifice; and at the same time to contribute what one life could contribute to the destruction of a custom which had brought misery upon so many thousands of loving fathers beside her own. Having dressed herself in her best, she climbed to the roof of the house, soaked her clothes in kerosene, and setting fire to them stood there burning in the sight of all the neighborhood. An attempt was made to save her, but it was too late.

In the pathetic note that she left she said among other things: "After I am gone, father, I know you will shed tears over my ashes. I shall be gone — but the house will be saved. I have been pondering on the best way of ending my worldly pilgrimage — Fire, Water, or Poison. I have preferred the first, and may the conflagration I shall kindle set the whole country on fire!"

This last prayer of hers seems in part to have been granted. For her sacrifice created a deep impression in Bengal and in other parts of India. Several girls in the last few months have followed her example and gone bravely to a self-imposed and dreadful death, and these heroic little women are doing more than many hours of lectures and many tons of pamphlets to bring home to young men and old the cruelty and shame of the custom which brought about their sacrifice.[1]

[1] The methods used to spread Snehalata's influence may seem to us at times a little odd, but the influence is none the less real. Thus the Jaina *Gazette* for April, 1914, informs us that "a Beharee gentleman of Bhagalpore has offered to award a cup to be named the 'Snehalata Cup,' open to Six-a-side Football Teams. . . . The cup bears the picture of Snehalata in flames with a vow engraved on it not to be a party to a marriage dowry. The competition has been open to all young men in Behar, and they must subscribe to the following vow: 'I solemnly declare that I shall not be a party to enforce marriage dowry either directly or indirectly: so help me God.'" —

REFORM MOVEMENTS WITHIN HINDUISM

We shall now turn to some of the more strictly religious reform movements of India. In the middle of the last century, and in fact up till about 1870, things began to look rather dark for Hinduism. The educated Indians were growing quite away from their native religion, leaving it almost without leaders or intelligent defenders and interpreters; and the only question worth asking seemed to be whether Christianity or skepticism should be its heir. But toward the close of the century reinforcements came into the beleaguered fortress; and Hinduism entered upon a period of renaissance which it is still enjoying. As a result a new cult of the Vedas and Shastras was established; intelligent and educated Indians were led to search for spiritual food in the writings and traditions and religious customs of their own country; and a defense was sought not only in authority, but in reason and experience for various Hindu customs which but a few years before the more enlightened Indians had condemned. [1]

The Ramakrishna movement is not the oldest of these forces in the restoration of Hinduism, but it is the most thoroughly Hindu. Its founder, Ramakrishna, was a man in whom the Indian type of spirituality expressed itself to an unusual degree. Brought up as a servitor in a temple of Kali, he became pos-

Unfortunately the public indignation against the dowry custom is now beginning to lose some of its force. In June of this year the Editor of the *Bengalee*,, in speaking of the effect of Snehalata's martyrdom, wrote: "Meetings were held, vows were taken; it seemed as if we were within a measurable distance of the abolition of a very pernicious usage. But this wicked thing yet lives. The monster only hid its head to rise again when the storm passed by; and thus we find even now extortionate demands made by the bridegrooms and their parents and guardians."

[1] Particularly notable is the attempt of many enthusiastic supporters of Hinduism to make use of methods which have proved fruitful in the hands of missionaries in the diffusion of Christianity. Mr. Farquhar gives a short summary of them as follows: "'Missionaries' have been sent out, 'Missions' established, 'Prayer Meetings' held, 'Young Men's Hindu Associations' formed, 'Gita Classes' conducted, 'Inquirers' interviewed, 'Tracts' distributed. . . . Some Hindus of Madras have got out a little Hindu Manual to distribute (to those who pass University Examinations). . . . A little volume has appeared consisting of verses from the Gita and the Bhagavat Purana in English and entitled *the Imitation of Shrikrishna!* Single Gospels are sold all over India in the vernacular at a pice each: a Bengali translation of the Gita is now sold in the streets of Calcutta at the same price." "The Future of Christianity in India"; reprinted from the *Hindustan Review* (Lahore, 1904), p. 36.

sessed while still a boy with extreme devotion to the Great Mother, and with a longing for perfect purity and for an immediate realization of the Divine. Early in life he turned sannyasi and for a period of years put himself through trying ordeals with the aim of overcoming every weakness of the flesh and all attachment to this world. In order to understand better the nature of the Divine, — not by theological discourses, but through immediate experience, — he joined in the worship of the various Hindu sects, low and high; he lived for some time with a Mohammedan saint; and learned what he could from Christianity. He took every man's religion very seriously and he tried so far as possible to practice each and to understand it from the inside.

"Thus from actual experience," says his disciple Vivekananda in writing of him, "he came to know that the goal of every religion is the same, that each is trying to teach the same thing, the difference being largely in method and still more in language. At the core, all sects and all religions have the same aim."

"As the same sugar is made into various figures," Ramakrishna used to say to his disciples, "so one sweet Mother Divine is worshiped in various climes and ages under various names and forms. Different creeds are but different paths to reach the Almighty. As with one gold various ornaments are made having different forms and names, so one God is worshiped in different countries and ages, and has different forms and names." [1]

In his later years Ramakrishna came to feel that he had a divine commission to preach the truth; and by that he meant no new doctrine, but the ancient conviction of India that God is closer to us than breathing and nearer than hands or feet, and that man's first duty is to realize the Divine within himself. This I say he constantly preached: yet he was no public preacher and never even went to meet an audience; — the audience came to him. "When the rose is blown," he used to

[1] Max Muller, *The Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna*, p. 100. A new *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (by Swami Saradananda) is just being published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, the first instalment having appeared in the January, 1915, number.

say, "and sheds its fragrance all around, the bees come of themselves. The bees seek the full-blown rose, and not the rose the bees." The fame of his spiritual wisdom gradually spread through the country-side, and "numbers of earnest men of all sects and creeds began to flock to him to receive instruction and to drink the waters of life. From day-dawn to nightfall he had no leisure to eat or drink, so engaged was he in teaching, exhorting, and ministering to the wants of these hungry souls. . . . Though this incessant labor began at last to tell upon him, yet he would not rest. When pressed to do so he would say: 'I would suffer willingly all sorts of bodily pains and death also, a hundred times if by doing so I could bring one single soul to freedom and salvation.'"

Finally, in 1885, he was attacked with cancer of the throat, and the physicians advised him to keep the strictest silence. "But the advice was to no effect. Crowds of men and women gathered wherever he went, and waited patiently to hear a single word from his mouth, and he, out of compassion for them, would not remain silent. . . . Even when the passage of his throat became so constricted that he could not swallow even liquid food, he would never stop his efforts. He was undaunted and remained as cheerful as ever till, on August 16, 1886, at ten o'clock in the night, he entered into Samadhi from which he never returned." [1]

Ramakrishna seems to have been a man of remarkable personal magnetism. Though with no knowledge of the English language nor of European culture, and with no wide reading in Indian literature, he made a deep impression upon the many hundreds who came to talk with him. And he seems to have left on nearly all who knew him the conviction that here was a man who had communed face to face with God. Vivekananda summarizes his message as follows: —

"Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas or sects or churches or temples: they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man which is his spirituality, and the more this is developed in man the more powerful he is for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticise no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them.

[1] Max Muller, *op. cit.*, pp. 55 and 57.

Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light." [1]

When Ramakrishna died he left a little group of young men who had sat at his feet and drunk in his message. Among these was Vivekananda, a man almost as remarkable as his master. Under his leadership these young men formed an Order of Sannyasins and Brahmacharins whose aim it was — and is — to redeem India through preaching and practicing the message of their dead Teacher. They accepted their master's teaching that all religions are equally true and lead ultimately to the same goal; but they drew from this premise the conclusion that for every people its own religion is best, inasmuch as no form of symbolism can ever have so much meaning to a man as that in which he has been brought up. They hold, moreover (whether consistently or not), that this ultimate truth underlying every religion is the Vedanta philosophy in its "Advaita" or monistic form. From both of these premises it follows, obviously enough, that the best religion for India is Hinduism. This being the case, the aim of the Order is naturally twofold: (1) to defend and resuscitate Hinduism and to show forth what they regard the true spiritual meaning of its various forms; and (2) to apply the spirit of the Vedanta teaching that all men are ultimately one in God, by ministering to every kind of need and responding to every call for helpfulness.

How far the Order would have developed the practical and actively philanthropic side of this work had Ramakrishna lived on indefinitely to guide its development is questionable. We have already seen that he regarded "works" somewhat askance, as tending to distract one from realization of God, which is the chief goal. To his friend Keshub Chunder Sen, who as the head of the Progressive Brahmo Samaj was doing so much active philanthropic and social work, he said: "You talk against child-marriage and the caste system, about female emancipation and female education. I say one thing is needful, — the

[1] *My Master* (Almora, Prabuddha Bharata Press, 1903), p. 35.

realization of God and devotion to Him. First realize God, and all other things shall be added unto you." [1]

Whatever would have been Ramakrishna's position had his life been prolonged, certain it is that the policy of the Order was very notably changed when Vivekananda, the successor of the founder, returned from his long trip in Europe and America, where he had been able to study at first hand the systematic philanthropy through which the spirit of Christ gets its partial expression. And it was, perhaps, as a result of these observations in the West that Vivekananda introduced into the Order a point of view reminiscent quite as much of Keshub Chunder Sen as of Ramakrishna. At any rate, since the time of Vivekananda's return to India, the devotional and the practical aims of the Order have gone on hand in hand.

The Society has carried on this double enterprise with very genuine devotion up to this day. It possesses some seven monasteries in different parts of India, the mother chapter being at Belur, a few miles up the river from Calcutta. All of these monasteries are centers of social and charitable work except one which is located up among the foothills of the Himalayas,[2] and which is especially devoted to meditation on the Advaita Vedanta. It is, in short, a hermitage where members may retire for a while and refresh their souls in contemplation. All the other monasteries of the Order are situated at or near important centers where their influence may be felt by India's masses: for its spirit is strikingly like that which dominated St. Francis and the early Franciscans.[3] To make their social and charitable work more efficient and to make easier the coöperation of laymen, the Order founded the "Ramakrishna Mission," which was legally incorporated in 1909, the Trustees of the Monastery at Belur being made *ex-officio* the Trustees of the new institution. In addition to the monasteries, which, as I have said, are centers of charitable work, the Ramakrishna Mission has six hospitals, or centers of medical relief, one

[1] *The Gospel of Ramakrishna*, p. 173.

[2] At Mayavati, fifty miles northeast of Almora and sixty-three miles from the nearest railroad station. It is at an altitude of 6800 feet above sea level.

[3] I have met several members of the Order in different parts of India, and can testify to the splendid devotion and unstinted love for all which these noble men and women possess.

orphanage, and three schools (one of them being for girls and women). There is a pitiful call for this work, and the Mission has responded with the most complete devotion, the only limit to this service being its limited supply of funds. Between July, 1911, and December, 1912, the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service in Benares ministered to some 14,178 persons, who were either sick or very old or starving; while the Ramakrishna Hospital at Brindaban during the year 1912 treated 24,382 patients. The motto of the Order is "Work is Worship."

The more intellectual side of the work is conducted by public sermons or addresses, by pamphlets, books, and periodicals.[1] Nor has the attempt of the Order to disseminate its truths been confined to India. Whether consistently or not with the fundamental proposition of their Master, that every religion is true and for each people its own religion is the best, the followers of Ramakrishna have found the missionary spirit in their own hearts so strong that they have been carried beyond the seas, and not only have several of their "swamis" made preaching tours through Europe, they have also founded some five permanent centers of missionary work in the United States — namely, at New York, Pittsburg, San Francisco, Boston, and Washington. In the "foreign field," as we should call it, it is of course only the Advaita Vedanta that is taught; but for India the Ramakrishna Order regards the external forms of Hinduism as useful symbols to lead the less intelligent up to the higher vision. Hence it does not oppose polytheism, but even regards it as having a real truth. Swami Vivekananda, as we have seen, was a devout worshiper of Shiva and Kali, and even taught his European disciple Miss Noble ("Sister Nivedita") to do puja to them. And in imitation of his example the Order to-day approves of an intelligent use of the images of the gods, as an aid to worship,[2] encourages pilgrimage, and to a

[1] The official publication of the Order is the *Prabuddha Bharata*, published monthly at Mayavati in the Himalayas.

[2] In discussing the use of idols Ramakrishna said: "We see little girls with their dolls. How long do they play with them? So long as they are not married. After marriage they put away those dolls. Similarly, one needs images and symbols so long as God is not realized in His true form. It is God Himself who has provided these various forms of worship. The Master of the universe has done all this to suit different men in different stages of

certain extent even defends an ideal form of the caste system. In short, it thoroughly believes in Hinduism. But the Hinduism it longs to see is an intelligent and spiritual Hinduism. No one has made more fun of the silly and cruel barriers and superstitions of caste than Vivekananda and his disciples — "Don't touchism" and "taking religion into the kitchen" he used to call these things. It is the spirit back of the form that these monks and workers are seeking. And true to their basal thought they protest also against the modern tendency to put the political before the spiritual.[1] A spiritual nationalism they would revive in India, but not the political sort preached by the Arya Samaj. And it is this ideal of a national spiritual culture which determines their ideal of education for India as a whole. "Swami Vivekananda's idea was that education in India must have its foothold secure on what history has transmitted to us as our ancient Indo-Aryan culture. In this culture the supreme end is the Vedic goal of spirituality, and from that standpoint

spiritual growth and knowledge." (*Gospel of Ramakrishna*, p. 64.) In this connection it should be pointed out that the common Indian tendency toward guru-worship, especially toward the worship of dead gurus, is very strong within the Order of Ramakrishna. Both Ramakrishna and Vivekananda are well on the way to deification. The eightieth anniversary of the birth of the former was recently celebrated at Belur and all the centers with ceremonies of "worship," and in fact his picture is "worshiped" every day at the Belur Math. A life-size statue of Vivekananda also, together with his "sacred ashes," is kept at Belur "in his samadhi Temple," and special reverence is paid there to him on each anniversary of his birth. See the *Prabuddha Bharata* for February, March, and April, 1915.

[1] Cf. the *Prabuddha Bharata* for June, 1914, pp. 102–08. Cf. also the following from the same periodical: "Alas, that educated Indians should still find it more acceptable to cling to the rôle of a beggar in politics than to pursue the manlier course of building up from within the real national life of India! The mistaken choice of a political basis for that life has not only robbed the national mind of its manly grace, but has kept it too long astray from the path of all real progress. . . . It is sheer ignorance which makes them [the educated Indians] covetous of the political nationalism of Europe. They do not dive deep enough into the philosophy of life or into Indian history to see that for the upbuilding of a nation it is possible to adopt a higher collective life than what is implied in the political nationalism of Europe." (*Prabuddha Bharata* for November, 1914, p. 216). "They do not pause to remember that India can have no scheme of life, individual or collective, unless it be *created* and *governed* by religion. . . . Religion requires to be preached, therefore, to modern India in its new significance as a nation-builder. We must make educated Indians admit and respect its superior claims in that respect, and the claims of politics must give way." (From the January, 1915, number, pp. 3 and 4.)

the significance and value of all the departments of knowledge and art are estimated. . . . Our ancient culture refuses to be dealt with in the way the modern educationists strive to do it. It is a sort of living organism, this culture, and no mechanical process of adding and subtracting will apply here. Within its integrity all human ends and ideals, ancient or modern, must have to enter as terms of the organic interrelation through which the supreme spiritual end fulfills itself. Unless our ancient culture is restored to this sort of organic existence, no element of any foreign culture can be properly absorbed by it."[1]

The members of the Order of Ramakrishna are not the only Indians who cherish these beliefs and these ideals. Some of the more able Indian educators outside the Order, and quite unconnected with it, are working with the same end in view. In fact, nowhere else does the attempt to rationalize and resuscitate Hinduism seem so promising as at the Central Hindu College in Benares. In this school and college (for it is both) boys and young men are given a sound general education and at the same time are systematically instructed, year after year, in the real inner meaning of the Hindu religion as their instructors view it. How far the rationalized Hinduism thus taught is historically justified need not trouble us; for it does not trouble either the students or their teachers. The aim of the teaching is not the academic one of painting an historical picture, but the more vital one of evolving out of Hindu beliefs and customs a religion and morality which shall combine the enormous prestige and emotional value which a hoary tradition gives, with intelligent selection, modern, scientific knowledge, and spiritual insight. As will be seen, this is no easy task, and the success of the undertaking must depend upon the wisdom of the teacher. In this respect the Central Hindu College is most fortunate in

[1] The *First General Report of the Ramakrishna Mission* [Belur, 1913], p. 27. Cf. Vivekananda's address on "The True Method of Social Reform": "To the reformers I will point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root and branch reform. Where we differ is exactly in the method. Theirs is the method of destruction, mine is that of construction. I do not believe in reform: I believe in growth." (*Speeches and Writings*, Madras, p. 619). See also some very sensible remarks on female education in the *Prabuddha Bharata* for November, 1914.

having a man like Babu Bhagavan Das to mould the philosophical and religious views of the young men under his charge. It is his constant endeavor to make his students dissatisfied with a merely slavish following of Hindu customs, and to pierce beyond the external form and ask in every case *the reason why;* and then, having discovered the *rationale* of each ruling custom, to apply it intelligently to the conduct of modern life.

The Central Hindu College is at present a part of the Allahabad University. But it will probably soon be changed into the Hindu University of Benares; for which large funds are coming in from generous Hindus all over India. The Maharaja of Benares has given a large tract of land for the site of the University, at Ramnagar on the Ganges, just outside of Benares; and Sir Harcourt Butler, the Education Member of the Indian Government, has introduced a bill into the Viceroy's Legislative Council, granting a charter to the proposed university. "The main features of this University," according to Sir Harcourt Butler, "which distinguish it from the existing universities will be first that it will be a teaching and residential university [not merely one that conducts examinations and directs the work of its colleges, as is the case with the present universities of India]; secondly, that while it will be open to all castes and creeds it will insist upon religious instruction for the Hindu students; and thirdly, that it will be conducted and managed by the Hindu community and almost entirely by non-officials." [1] The university, moreover, is to be open not only to all castes and creeds but to both sexes. And while one clause of its charter provides that Hindu theology and religion shall be required subjects for Hindu students, according to another clause Jainism and Sikhism are to be taught to Jaina and Sikh students if funds are subscribed for that purpose by those religious communities.

In other parts of India beside Benares other individuals are working at the same great problem of religious education. One of these is the poet, Rabindranath Tagore. Many Westerners would probably be surprised to learn that the principal occupation of the man who won the Nobel Prize is not writing poetry but running a school. The great need of

[1] Reported in *The Indian Social Reformer* for March 28, 1915.

his country, as he sees it, he told me, is the achievement of inner and social freedom; and the one hope for the attainment of this goal is the development of a greater spiritual insight among the leaders of thought and an extension of this downward through them to all ranks of society. In other words, the immediate problem is the education of the right kind of leaders. It is an enormous task, and to do his share in it he has founded a school for boys from five to eighteen years of age. He lectures to the older boys on religion and philosophy, trying to communicate to them the spirit of the Upanishads. His assistant teachers he has educated himself, and the annual deficit of the school he pays out of his own funds.[1] At first his opposition to caste made it difficult for him to get students, but now he has about two hundred of them (mostly Brahmins) and could get more if he could afford to enlarge his institution. The school is situated in the country[2] at some distance from Calcutta, and only boarders are taken; for his aim is not to teach courses, but to mould character, and so he insists on having the opportunity of influencing his boys twenty-four hours in the day. The classes are all held out of doors, under the trees, and the boys are very happy, entering into the spirit of the school and being in fact a self-governing body. It is to centers like this that Tagore looks for the ultimate regeneration of India.

I have named this chapter "Reform Movements within Hinduism"; but I should at least mention, before closing it, that great new tendency within Hinduism for defense as well as reform. The Ramakrishna Mission, of course, aims at both, as does also the Arya Samaj, which we shall study in the next chapter. In fact most of the modern movements of Hinduism blend both these aims, though with varying emphasis. And many of the religious tendencies which are rousing the interests of thousands of Hindus have for their chief purpose the revival of the old religion rather than its reform. Most Westerners would be

[1] According to Basanta Koomer Roy, "Tagore has given the Nobel Prize money to the school, and the royalties on his books have been consecrated for the same purpose." (*Rabindranath Tagore, the Man and His Poetry* [New York, Dodd, Mead & Co., 1915], p. 175.)

[2] At Bolepore.

astonished to see the intense interest in religious topics, the avidity in seizing upon new ideas, — or new forms of old ideas, — in short, the inner and spiritual commotion with which India to-day is seething. The land teems with religious and social conferences and congresses. In nearly all the sub-sects into which Hinduism is divided there are small groups of earnest men who are endeavoring to revivify the old teachings and customs; and many of the castes have yearly conferences in which unity, defense, and sometimes reform are eagerly discussed. The spirit of Nationalism has awakened, and with a large number it has been identified with the defense of the national religion. Hinduism is becoming, for the first time in its history, thoroughly self-conscious.[1]

In our last chapter we saw that Hinduism was decaying. And so in one sense it is. Its idolatry, its polytheism, its shradda rites, its externalism cannot long stand before the attacks of modern knowledge. Many of the organizations referred to above, to be sure, aim at the defense of just these ancient customs and beliefs; but the very attempt to discuss these matters means the introduction of a certain amount of reason, and reason will inevitably make the baser and more superstitious elements of Hinduism increasingly unacceptable to intelligent Indians.[2] Very suggestive in this connection is

[1] It may be in part due to this new life within Hinduism that, whereas in the decade 1891–1901, its numbers decreased by .28 per cent, in the decade 1901–11 they increased at the rate of 5 per cent. Typical of the new spirit and the growing self-conscious unity of Hinduism was the formation, in 1902, of the Bharata Dharma Mahamandala, an organization in which united various conservative Hindu societies. In the first eight years of its existence it gained recognition as representative of the whole Hindu community from the various heads of the chief Hindu sects and orders. "Some 600 branches had been opened, and about 400 institutions had been affiliated. Nearly 200 preachers were employed; a considerable literature had been put into circulation; and large sums of money had been subscribed." (Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements*, p. 319.)

[2] In this connection the following extract from an account of a conference of old-fashioned Brahmins at Beerbhoom, in April, 1915, will be found illuminating as well as typical. "The total number of the assembly was more than 2,000. Proceedings began with Vedic hymns and *stotras* recited by a band of young Brahmacharis. Questions were then discussed relating to practical measures for the prevention of compulsory dowries; for the Shastric education of Brahmin boys and priests, for the preservation of Hindu institutions, including the maintenance of temples, excavation of tanks, and preservation of cows and pasturage; greater dissemination of

the stand recently taken by that pillar of Hindu conservatism and orthodoxy, Sir Subrahmanya Iyer. In spite of his love for the ancient Dharma — or rather, perhaps, because of it — he came out in January of this year with an article on the "New Hinduism" in which he says: "The conditions of Hindu society to-day are, it is to be regretted, such as to make the hope of the future lie not in any tinkering with this and that part of the existing structure in its present dilapidated state, but in removing with an unsparing hand the poisonous weedy growth and the entire débris under which lie buried the primeval foundations of Hinduism, and upon them to erect a new and simpler edifice of just such proportions and utility as are needed for our present demands." Among the "poisonous growths" which he would remove he includes idol worship, child marriage, and the caste system. The really sacred scriptures of Hinduism he would have clearly marked off from the many valueless writings that lay claim to this title, and the more important of these sacred books he would put, in English translation, within the reach of all Hindus. And he would call Hinduism back from its many gods and their images to the universal recognition of the one Absolute and Unmanifested Brahman, and to the worship of the Manifested Brahman and of Him alone.[1]

It is probable that in spite of Sir Subrahmanya and his more radical juniors, the ancient customs and beliefs will keep their hold for centuries over the masses of ignorant Hindus. But, as every year makes more evident, the steadily growing numbers of the educated cannot be satisfied with them indefinitely. Does this mean that Hinduism is doomed? The answer to this question will depend largely on the success of reform move-

Hindu ideas of religion and morality among Brahmins; preparation of religious textbooks for Hindu students, and starting students' boarding houses under the supervision and control of Brahmin Sabhas. On both days Brahmins from distant parts of Beerbhoom and the adjoining districts came in on foot in very large numbers in spite of the extreme heat, and manifested intense enthusiasm and religious fervor. The people of the locality showed great veneration for the assembly, and immediately after the close of each sitting collected the dust of the feet of the Brahmins left on the sheets covering the ground, rushing in hundreds into the pandal." (*The Indian Social Reformer* for April 25, 1915.)

[1] See *The Indian Social Reformer* for February 7 and 14, 1915.

ments such as those studied in this and the following chapter. If the reforms fail, we may expect intelligent Hindus to accept in increasing numbers a rationalized Christianity — or to fall in ever-growing throngs into a flippant agnosticism. But it is possible that just as a more liberal and more human Christianity is growing out of scholasticism and Calvinism, so a new and purified Hinduism may develop out of what was best in the ancient Dharma. The outcome is uncertain, but the problem for the enlightened is plain. It is a question of national spiritual education. And the one feature in the present situation that seems really promising from the Hindu standpoint is the fact, already alluded to, that Hinduism — yes, that India — is at last gradually becoming conscious of itself. To increase this self-consciousness and to raise aloft a purified but truly Indian ideal is the aim and task of the reformers.

CHAPTER X

THE BRAHMO SAMAJ AND THE ARYA SAMAJ

OF all the Indian reform movements the one best known in the West, and in fact the only one well known in the West, is the Brahmo Samaj.[1] Its leaders have been considerably influenced by Western ideas, and (partly in consequence) the West has been considerably interested in their work. Hence in Western discussions of contemporary religious conditions in India the Brahmo Samaj usually assumes an importance out of all proportion to its membership and actual influence in India. Yet it must be admitted that this influence has been remarkable considering the paucity of its members. It was founded in 1828 [2] by Ram Mohun Roy, a learned and spiritual Bengalee, who by a prolonged study of Hinduism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity became convinced that the essential truth for which each stands is the same truth, and that on this common foundation a Universal Theistic Church might be erected, in which all men might ultimately find membership. Ram Mohun Roy was not only a scholarly and religious man; he was a man of the world and had wide-awake human interests and exhibited considerable practical efficiency. The primal impulse in the Indian movement for social reform which is so widespread to-day came largely from him. It was to a great extent through his efforts that widow-burning was given up and that modern education was extended throughout Bengal. A little over two years after the founding of the Samaj, Ram Mohun Roy went to England for a visit — as he planned; but while there he was taken ill, and died in September, 1833.

For some years after the death of its founder the Samaj

[1] "The Church of God."

[2] It was not until 1830 that it received its present name and had a church building of its own. In 1828 it had the name "Brahmo Sabha" and its meetings were held in a rented house.

suffered a considerable relapse. It was kept alive during these lean years chiefly by the backing of Prince Dwarakanath Tagore, of Calcutta, until in 1841 fresh spiritual enthusiasm was brought into it by Tagore's son, Devendranath Tagore, of whom mention has several times been made in previous chapters. He had passed through a marked religious experience three years before, as a result of his first reading of the Upanishads, and had founded a theistic and anti-idolatrous society of his own, which eventually merged with the Brahmo Samaj. From the time this young man joined the Samaj, with his group of enthusiastic followers, he became its spiritual head and soon also the sole trustee of its property, and for years thereafter his will was the governing power of the society. His ideal was that the Samaj should be essentially Hindu, — though strictly monotheistic and opposed to idolatry, — and that it should be first of all a religious body, with social reform as only a very secondary aim. It was to feed the spiritual life and to feed it with the food to be derived from the best of the Indian religious tradition. "The Jewish and its offshoot the Christian conceptions of God, heaven, and salvation seemed to him to be so anthropomorphic and shallow that he passed them by with silent contempt, and devoutly turned to the Hindu conception of God as immanent in matter and mind. His solemn conviction was that in matters spiritual the Hindus had no need to turn to the West; rather the West had much to learn from the East." [1]

Early in Tagore's leadership a controversy arose between some of the members of the Samaj and certain Christian missionaries, during the course of which the former asserted that the religion of the Samaj was based upon the Vedas and that the Vedas were infallible. This indeed seems at first to have been Tagore's opinion. The more rationalistic members of the Samaj, however, had decided doubts on this point, and as a consequence a controversy arose on the question of infallibility. One of the most interesting things about this controversy is that it transpired that neither party had ever read more than a small part of the Vedas or had any clear idea what they contained, and that Tagore, with his usual patient good sense,

[1] Shivanath Shastri, *History of the Brahmo Samaj*, vol. I, p. 188.

kept an open mind on the question and sent four young members of the Samaj to Benares to study the Vedas with competent teachers. After two years the emissaries returned; and when Tagore had learned from them what the Vedas really taught, and had verified their report by going to Benares himself and holding a long interview with the most learned pundits, the doctrine of the infallibility of the Vedas was definitely given up. This, however, did not mean that the Samaj should cease to be Hindu, or that the belief in the general inspiration of the Vedas and especially of the Upanishads should be discarded. The Upanishads were still held to be inspired in part, with a human element intermingled; — the extreme monistic passages in the tone of Shankara's philosophy being regarded as emphatically *not* inspired. For the devotional needs of the society Tagore, therefore, compiled a kind of eclectic scripture from various theistic passages in the Upanishads, and called it the "Brahma Dharma" [1] — a compilation which the Samaj to-day regards as one of his greatest achievements.

In 1857 a young man joined the Samaj who was destined to play a great rôle in its history, namely, Keshub Chunder Sen. Mr. Sen, — or as he is more commonly known, Keshub, — though brought up in a deeply religious Brahmin family, was considerably influenced by Christianity, and his study for years after joining the Samaj increased his enthusiastic admiration for Jesus. Devendranath Tagore soon recognized his earnestness and religious zeal, and his ability as a leader and inspirer of men, and gave him a large share in directing the activities of the Samaj. Keshub brought into the society a great enthusiasm for reform and a kind of evangelical religious spirit which kindled the hearts of many young men to devotion and sacrifice for the cause of liberal and inward religion. Tagore coöperated with his young follower most heartily; educational movements were started, missionaries and wandering preachers were sent to various parts of Bengal and even to the Punjab, Bombay,[2] and Madras, and branch societies were

[1] See his own interesting account of this in his autobiography

[2] The branch of the Samaj founded under Sen's influence in Bombay in 1867 became the Prarthna Samaj, which has done such excellent work for the outcastes.

founded in many centers. But before many years it became evident that the conservative and radical elements in the Samaj could not permanently pull together. The older men wished to keep "Brahmanism" a branch of Hinduism, and looked askance at Keshub's Christian leanings and especially at his reforming ideals; while the followers of Keshub — almost all young men under twenty-five — were eager to make Brahmanism a universal religion and the Samaj a center of radical social reforms. The storm finally broke in 1864, when the most radical of the younger men demanded that the Samaj place itself squarely against the caste system by discharging from the office of minister all those who still retained the Brahmanical triple cord. The older men accepted the issue and forced Tagore to choose between radicalism and conservatism. His heart seems to have been with Keshub, but he thought that duty pointed the other way, so he stood by the older men. Keshub and his followers remained nominally within the Samaj till 1867, when they went out and founded a society of their own, called the "Brahmo Samaj of India" — the older branch from now on being distinguished by the title the "Adi [or Original] Brahmo Samaj." [1] It was characteristic of the young Bengalee enthusiasts who founded the new Samaj that in their meeting for organization none of the mundane subjects which usually take up men's thoughts at such a time were considered. They passed many resolutions, but they quite forgot to elect officers. "Thus," as Shivanath Shastri rather humorously observes, "the Brahmo Samaj of India was ushered into existence with no governing body, no rules, no constitution, but with God above as President and Keshub Chunder Sen as its virtual secretary." [2]

If God above was the President of the new Samaj, the "virtual secretary" was regarded by most of the members (and by

[1] The schism was a hard blow for old Devendranath Tagore, and the criticism which his action received from some of the younger men was not easy to bear. But he acted throughout in the spirit of selflessness taught by his religion, and never defended his actions against criticism. He wrote an autobiography, but brought it to a close at the year when Keshub joined the Samaj so that he need not enter into any self-defense in the matter of the schism. He died in 1899.

[2] *Op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 180.

himself) as standing on terms of peculiar intimacy with the President and as being His spokesman on all important questions. Some of his followers regarded Keshub as a kind of God-man and paid him reverence approaching almost to worship; and there can be no doubt that Keshub, though not approving of this, did regard himself at times as peculiarly inspired. Not all the members of the Brahmo Samaj of India shared in this adulation of their leader, and the antagonism between these two groups was a source of weakness for the Samaj, and eventually led to the second great schism. Much, however, was done by it, especially in its earlier years. Missionaries continued to be sent out and new branches organized. By the year 1878 the number of these branches had risen to 124. Nor did Keshub forget that his ideals for the Samaj included more than individual religion. It was characteristic of the man that he founded his new society on a practical and social issue. Christianity seems to have influenced him quite as much as Hinduism; and it was but natural that the practical needs of suffering India should have for him a powerful appeal and that he should throw himself and his society into the battle against various social evils, such as child marriage and the caste system, with an enthusiasm and a force that have made an indelible mark on Indian history. It was through his efforts that a law was passed in 1872 making possible a new form of marriage which should be neither Hindu, Mohammedan, nor Christian, and by means of which a man and a woman of different castes might be married and no idol be used in the ceremony. One of the excellent stipulations of this law was that this form of marriage could not be made use of unless the man were at least sixteen and the woman at least fourteen. This law, of course, had no bearing on the marriage of Hindus, who could still marry their children at any age; but at least it was a *first step* in the right direction.

But alas for our poor human courage and consistency. After fighting so splendidly against the evils of child marriage and accomplishing so much for it, the leader and hero of the progressive Samaj in 1878 gave his own daughter in marriage at the age of thirteen years and a few months.[1] And when he

[1] The inconsistency was not so glaring as it seems on a mere recital.

refused to retire from the pulpit as requested to do by a majority of the members, these left him and went out to found a new society called the "Sadharana [or universal] Brahmo Samaj."

All three Samajes are still existing side by side, and all have their headquarters in Calcutta.[1] They have a committee made up of representatives from all three divisions for certain purposes: but there is no immediate prospect of further union. This is a rather sad result considering the noble aims of the movement and the lofty minds that have lived and labored for it; in view also of the fact that in all India the three Samajes together number but 5500 members, and that on the essentials of belief and moral aim they are almost at one.

The Brahmo Samaj teaches, as the Order of Ramakrishna does, that there is some truth in every religion. But it differs from the latter on the question of what this truth is. The followers of Ramakrishna make this vital core of all religions (once they are understood) to consist in the Vedanta philosophy. The Samaj substitutes for the Vedanta three simple beliefs: (1) That there is but One God, "the First Without a Second"; (2) that the soul has before it an endless progress; (3) that worship or realization of God is the duty of man. Though direct antagonism to the Vedanta is not part of the

Keshub's daughter was betrothed to a local Raja who it was thought (and the expectation proved correct) could be won over entirely to the Samaj by this union, with perhaps a considerable following of his people. The Raja refused to wait any longer for his bride, and his family also insisted on the marriage being celebrated in Hindu fashion (in the presence of an idol). Keshub insisted on having a "Brahmo" marriage ceremony in addition; and also refused to allow his daughter to live with her husband as wife till she had reached her fourteenth birthday. Hence he regarded the matter as a form only, and for the sake of winning the Raja and his following to the Samaj he thought this exception might be made. His opponents, of course, pointed out that it was *forms* they were fighting, and that one exception, especially if made by a man of influence, may lead to many.

[1] The "Sadharana Brahmo Samaj" is by far the largest of the three and in fact is the only one that retains much influence. The "Brahmo Samaj of India" had an interesting history so long as its leader lived. It was renamed by him "The Church of the New Dispensation" — for he regarded himself as divinely inspired, and the movement which he led he considered a continuation of the work of Christ, and (apparently) quite on a par with it in inspiration and importance. On Keshub's death no one could wear his mantle, and the "Brahmo Samaj of India" quickly disintegrated. It is at present split into four bodies who cannot agree to unite.

official creed of the Samaj, most of its members are thoroughly opposed to it. They find the Vedanta not only intellectually unsatisfactory, but morally harmful.[1]

In like manner the Brahmo Samaj (in contrast to the Ramakrishna movement and to the Theosophical Society) has altogether broken with every form of polytheism and of idolatry and does not hesitate to attack them both. But while agreeing thus closely with Christianity and Islam in their monotheism, the Brahmo Samaj parts company with the former in its view of incarnation, and with both in their belief in authority and special and exclusive revelations. Each man must be free to find and see the truth for himself. The truth is not bound and the truth is not provincial, nor did God reveal Himself once and then cease to communicate with men. The Brahmo Samaj, though rejecting the Vedanta, has retained the universal Indian faith, so wonderfully expressed in the Upanishads, of the union of the soul with God. The God of the Brahmoist is no "infinite and eternal Energy from which all things proceed," nor is He an absolute Creator of the eighteenth-century type. He is closer to us than breathing, "nearer than hands and feet." The Brahmoists lay a great deal of emphasis on the possibility of this "loving communion with the Supreme" and the consequent "duty of habitual communion." According to their teaching, this immediate realization of the Divine is the very fountain of life and life's supreme goal, as well as the source of an unfailing faith in a life that shall be endless.

[1] "Under the influence of Vedantism," writes the leader of the "Universal Brahmo Samaj," "the theory of *maya* or illusion has been invented, which looks upon society and its relations as so many snares, the greatest wisdom of an aspirant for final deliverance lying in shunning them. This anti-social philosophy has done an incalculable amount of harm in this country. It has drawn away into the life of mendicancy hundreds of spiritually disposed persons, and thereby robbed society of their personal influence and example, and has led many others . . . to pine away in life by looking upon the world as a prison-house. It has checked the spirit of philanthropy as a part of religious exercise, and has made the cast of Hinduism somber and melancholy. It is the mission of the Theistic Church of India to raise Hinduism and Hindu society from this somber and gloomy view of life and this tainting touch of Vedantism by teaching that human society is a divine dispensation, and all its relationships are sacred and spiritual." Shivanath Shastri, *The Mission of the Brahmo Samaj* (Calcutta, Kuntaline Press, 1910), pp. 50–51.

But the Brahmo Samaj has absorbed so much of the spirit of Jesus that it cannot stop here, but goes on as He did to apply the love of God to the help of man. It has not indeed done all it might or should have done for the great need of its native land. It is on the whole rather more pietistic and Indian than helpful and Christian. And yet it has done something; and particularly in the matters of marriage reform and the destruction of caste it has shown a courage and at times an active energy quite uncommon in India. And this is true not only of the society as such, but of its members as individuals. In two of the three branches of the Samaj one must break with caste before he can become a member. Whoever knows India will recognize that to do this must at times involve no little heroism, no little suffering and sacrifice in the cause of an ideal. In illustration of this let me repeat very briefly the story of his own experience which the venerable leader of the "Universal Brahmo Samaj," Mr. Shivanath Shastri, told me.

He was seventeen when he determined to join the Brahmo Samaj and to break his triple cord. His father begged him not to do so, then forbade, then threatened. But the young man steadfastly answered, "I love you, father, but in this I cannot obey you." So he broke his triple cord and joined the Samaj, as his conscience would not permit him to do otherwise. His father thereupon disowned him, refused to see him, had him driven from the house and notified him he should never return to it again or attempt to see his mother. The poor woman, of course, was utterly wretched over it, so the young man occasionally crept in by stealth, when his father was away, to see his mother for a few minutes, and "take the dust from her feet," putting it on his head according to the Indian custom. Learning of these visits, the father employed two men to lie in wait for his son and beat him whenever he visited his mother. These floggings went on for a period of five years, until in fact the strain was so great that it began to break down his mother's health, when the men were at last discharged. But for nineteen years the father never spoke to his son or allowed him in his presence. And all the while, with hearts half-broken, father and son kept on loving each other. It was only at the age of

seventy-five, and then apparently on his death-bed, that the old man saw his son again and his pride melted at last.

Mr. Shastri is only one of many members of the Brahmo Samaj who have gone through trials like this for the sake of the faith that is in them and for the coming good of India. And results have justified their sacrifice. By devotion such as this, they have been able to build up in various parts of India little communities free from the shackles of caste which are as shining lights in the darkness of slavery to tradition and self-imposed misery all about them. It was our good fortune while in India to attend the eighty-fourth anniversary of the founding of the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta, and to see there an object-lesson in this hardly won freedom. The day was celebrated by what we might call a children's party and picnic in the meeting-house and grounds of the Samaj. The children, with many of their parents and older sisters, assembled in the hall used for preaching services, and here they were entertained for some time by short talks and good stories. Many of the older girls came up to our venerable friend, Mr. Shastri, and "took the dust from his feet," and he introduced them with pride as being eighteen or more and still unmarried and in school (!). After a little we all adjourned into the grounds, and there in many rows all the children sat down (Indian fashion) to a little feast. It was one of the most beautiful sights that I saw in India — no thought of caste, no fear of eating with your neighbor, no questioning who had drawn the water, no dread of defilement from some vile "untouchable" near by; all enjoying together the pleasant food, the fresh air, and the flowers, in the sunlight of God's love who made of one flesh all the children of men. It was a vision of what might be all over sad India if the Brahmo Samaj and the Christian missionary could win the day.

Unfortunately there is little sign of the Brahmo Samaj winning much of the day. Its membership, as I have said, is very small and not noticeably increasing. Its members are sadly divided and there is a reactionary party within it which favors something like a compromise with Hinduism. Moreover, in social work it is not so active as it should be — not even so active as it once was. Yet it is doing something to attack the

evils of Hindu society and to spread its message of universal theism and brotherly love. This it does chiefly by schools for the young — for it takes good care at least that its children shall be brought up with an intelligent appreciation of their religion. It also has weekly preaching services and forms of public worship modeled after those of Protestant Christian churches. For the spread of its doctrine it has several publications, and it supports a few missionaries in various parts of the peninsula. And in spite of their small numbers the Brahmoists are hopeful — for, as they put it, he who has the truth on his side is always hopeful. But the leaders of the movement are too wise to suppose that all the world will some day come and join the Brahmo Samaj. They recognize the distinction between the universal and the local or national in religion and they realize that each has its place and each may be helpful. Even within India they recognize that local differences will always survive among the various religious bodies of the land. "But each and all of these bodies" (this is the hope) "will agree in the universal aspects of the faith, in loving communion with the Supreme, in the abjuration of idolatry, in sociality and morality, in spiritual independence, in freedom from the errors of incarnation and mediation, and in the spirit of true catholicity. Thus the universal and the national will be combined in one faith and practice. In special reverences and preferences also there will be widely varying attitudes. The theists of India will naturally look up to the Rishis mainly as sources of inspiration; the theistic congregations of the West will draw their spiritual sustenance from the life and teachings of Jesus; whereas theistic bodies brought up under the influence of Islam will naturally turn for their spiritual edification chiefly to the Arabian Prophet. Thus will all the modern faiths, divested of their peculiarly sectarian narrowness, come and mingle in a mighty confluence which in essential features will be natural and universal theism. That is the goal toward which we are pushing on." [1]

The Arya Samaj, or Church of the Aryas, is considerably younger and also much larger than the Brahmo Samaj. It is, in fact, by far the largest of the various native reform move-

[1] *The Mission of the Brahmo Samaj*, pp. 107–08.

ments of India — if indeed we may include under reform movements an organization which regards itself as the most conservative and truly reactionary society in the world. The Arya Samaj was founded in 1875 by a man who in learning and earnest zeal for his country's welfare resembled Ram Mohun Roy, but who in other ways was in marked contrast to him. The founder of the Brahmo Samaj, as we have seen, was a man of European education who had made a deep study of both Mohammedanism and Christianity and who conceived of a universal religion which in its larger aspect should have no touch of provincialism or nationality. Swami Dayanand, on the other hand, was an Indian of the Indians, a sannyasi of the old type, who knew but little about the culture and religion of the West, and cared less, and whose ideals were altogether bounded by the traditions of his land. He too dreamed of a universal religion; but this universal religion was to be simply the ancient religion of his own country, which, since it was the only true religion, ought to be adopted by all the world.

"Dayanand" was not the original name of this rather remarkable man.[1] He kept his name concealed for years after he left home, so that his father might not be able to find him; and adopted in its stead the name "Dayanand" by which he has been known ever since. For when he was about twenty-one he had run away from his parents in order to avoid being married, his great desire being to give himself up to the celibate, religious life of a Brahmachari, and to seek out, by means of ancient books and his own reflection and experience, the pathway to salvation. Even as a boy he had become thoroughly skeptical of the value of puja to idols (though his father was an enthusiastic worshiper in the temple of Shiva), and the older he grew the more disgusted he became with the whole practice. For years he wandered through the length and breadth of India, visiting learned men and making himself thoroughly conversant with the sacred Sanskrit literature. And at Mathura he came upon a great Vedic scholar named Swami Virjanand, who strengthened in him the belief toward which he was already tending, and which was destined to be the foundation

[1] His original name was Mul Shankar — a fact which came out only after his death.

principle of the Arya Samaj. For the Swami's first instruction to him was to "drown" all his modern books in the river. And when Swami Virjanand died, and Dayanand's real mission began, he went up and down the land preaching a purer Hinduism with the cry ever on his lips, *Back to the Vedas!*

Swami Dayanand Saraswati (for that was his full name, given him when he was made a sannyasi) was a man of unusual gifts and great learning, and (if we may believe the accounts of his followers) he usually got the better of the pundits whom he was constantly challenging to public discussion. He was gifted with great physical powers and lectured with untiring energy to the crowds who came to hear him, from morning to night. His usual subjects of discourse were the folly and sin of idolatry, polytheism, and pantheism, and the untrustworthiness of most of the so-called sacred books of India except the Vedas and the older Shastras. He got a considerable following in several of the cities of the Punjab, the United Provinces, and Bombay, and in 1875 he began forming these into a society known as the "Arya Samaj." He died in 1883. The Rev. C. F. Andrews, in his book "The Indian Renaissance," writes of him as follows: "For Dayanand's personality and character there may well be almost unqualified admiration. He was a puritan to the backbone, and lived up to his creed. He was a fighter, strong, virile, independent, if somewhat imperious in behaviour. . . . His courage in facing his own countrymen through years of contumely and persecution was nothing less than heroic. He was a passionate lover of truth." [1]

The teachings of the Samaj are of course the teachings of its founder, based upon his ten or more books and pamphlets, his lectures and his method of interpreting the scriptures. The most fundamental of these teachings, as has been said, are the doctrines that there is but one God and that the Vedas are absolutely authoritative and nothing else is. By the Vedas the Samaj understands only the hymns or "Samhita" of the four Vedas. The Brahmanas and ten of the Upanishads, together with Manu and a few other ancient books, are regarded as useful and worthy of veneration, but are not considered to be in-

[1] Quoted by Lajpat Rai in *The Arya Samaj* (London, Longmans, 1915), p. 281.

spired or authoritative. They were written by wise and pious Rishis of old, but did not come from God Himself; and thus for the Arya Samaj they occupy much the same position as is held in Christianity by the writings of the Church Fathers. The Veda, on the other hand, is eternal and comes from God Himself.[1] He inspired it at the beginning of creation in the hearts of four great Rishis. They did not originate it, but acted merely as channels through which the four eternal Vedas — which are really one — were communicated to men. The Veda is not only eternal and absolutely authoritative. It is "comprehensive and perfect, free from all error, and incapable of being amended or of becoming obsolete in part or in whole." [2] It is from the Vedas that all human knowledge, directly or indirectly, is derived. "As people inhabiting some immense forest have all the instincts and ways of brutes, even such instincts and ways would all mankind have retained from the beginning of creation to the present time, if the Vedas had not been revealed to them." [3]

It is evident that our Western upholders of the literal inspiration of the Bible have still something to learn from these Indian exegetes. And the more one listens to their claims, the more one's wonder grows. The Vedic religion, it seems, was the primitive religion of all the world. "All the people believed in it," says Dayanand, "and regarded one another like their second self." For in those good old times there was easy communication between all parts of the earth; and we have it on Dayanand's authority that the kings of India contracted matrimonial alliances with the kings of America. Nor need one wonder at this, for steam and electricity and all so-called modern discoveries and inventions were known at least in germ in the Vedic days and in fact are all revealed (to the eye of faith) within the Veda. Of course these brave assertions require for their confirmation an equally courageous method of interpretation. To the ignorant Western reader the Rig Veda *seems* to teach plainly the existence of many gods, the

[1] This doctrine, of course, is not original with Dayanand, but has been the orthodox Indian view for thousands of years.

[2] Bawa Chhajju Singh, *The Teaching of the Arya Samaj* (Lahore, Punjab Printing Works, 1903), p. 101.

[3] Quoted by Bawa Chhajju Singh from Dayanand, p. 90.

Atharva *seems* to be full of primitive, superstitious, magical conceptions, and all four *seem* to have about as much relation to science as has the story of Jack the Giant Killer. I hinted at something of the sort to one of the most influential and learned members of the Samaj, — a gentleman of very considerable culture and ability whom I met in Lahore. He answered with a smile that things might naturally *seem* so to one who knew no Sanskrit or to European Sanskritists who came to the study of the Vedas with Western prejudices; that as a fact all European translations of the Vedas were bad mistranslations; that there were no magical formulas in the Atharva nor any hint of polytheism in the Rik; and that whatever in the text of the Vedas *seemed* to be polytheistic, false, or magical must be taken as a symbolical expression of a deeper truth. This last sentence of my informant gives the real Arya method of interpretation: granted first of all that the Veda teaches only what is true, everything in it that seems to be mistaken must be either a "late interpolation" or a symbol merely of the real but hidden meaning.[1]

According to Dayanand and the Arya Samaj, then, there is but one God, who is spiritual and personal. Polytheism and the use of images are regarded as vile degenerations from the original pure monotheistic worship of the Vedas, and they are attacked and ridiculed on every occasion. The One God is eternal; but so also are matter and all finite souls. God did not *create* matter; but there is a succession of endless cycles, and at the beginning of each God creates the world out of the pre-existing matter.

Dayanand is an enthusiastic upholder of the traditional Indian belief in transmigration and Karma, and naturally has no difficulty in finding ample authority for it in the Vedas (a thing no European critic has ever been able to do). The soul that has obtained release from Karma is not (as the Vedanta teaches) absorbed in God. "She keeps her individual existence and moves about at liberty without any impediment in God,

[1] That men of such learning, ability, and liberal ideas as are many of the members of the Arya Samaj should entertain views such as these on the nature of the scriptures and the proper interpretation thereof would seem a psychological puzzle, if we were not familiar with any number of examples of the same sort of thing much nearer home.

who pervades all, with her happiness and knowledge perfected." [1] The means of salvation are, according to Dayanand, the following: "Obedience to God's commandments; freedom from irreligion [vice]; freedom from ignorance, from bad company, from evil thoughts or associations, and from improper sensuousness or indulgence in wicked pleasures; veracity, beneficence, knowledge, impartial justice, devotion to the cause of virtue or religion, remembering God, praying to Him, meditating on Him, or introspection, acquiring knowledge, teaching, any honest profession, the advancement of knowledge, the adoption of righteous means in affairs, doing everything with impartiality, equity, and righteousness." [2]

It will be seen from this that for Dayanand and his followers, religion and morality are very closely associated, and that in fact the great means of salvation are the culture of the soul and the performance of one's duty. This comes out again very clearly in the "The Principles of the Arya Samaj," which I append in a note.[3] The moral trend of the whole movement is indeed very strong, and it has resulted not only in individual morality, but in a considerable amount of effort in philan-

[1] Dayanand, *Satyarth Prakash* (English translation, Lahore, Virjanand Press, 1908), p. 260.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 260.

[3] 1. God is the Primary Source of all True Knowledge and all that is known by its means.

2. God is All-Truth, All-Knowledge, and Happiness itself, Incorporeal, Almighty, Just, Merciful, Unbegotten, Infinite, Unchangeable, Without a Beginning, Incomparable, All-supporting, The Lord of All, All-pervading, Omniscient, Imperishable, Immortal, Fearless, Eternal, Holy, and the Cause of the Universe. To Him alone Worship is due.

3. The Veda is the Book of True Knowledge, and it is the duty of all Aryas to study, teach, recite, and hear it.

4. One should always be ready to accept Truth and renounce Falsehood.

5. Duty determined after due consideration of right and wrong should be the basic principle of all our activities.

6. To benefit the world is the chief object of the Arya Samaj; i.e., to effect physical, spiritual, and social improvement.

7. Love, Righteousness, and Propriety should be the guiding principles in our dealing with others.

8. We ought to eradicate ignorance and propagate knowledge.

9. No one should rest contented with his individual improvement but should consider his own improvement in that of others.

10. In all affairs that affect the well-being of society at large the individual is unfree, but in strictly personal matters he may have his own way.

thropy and for social reform. It has for years been the leader of Hindu activity in the founding of orphanages, — with the twofold aim of saving children from starvation and from Christianity. In the great famines of 1897–98, and 1899–1900 it did a large amount of excellent relief work, particularly in connection with its many orphanages which were thrown open for the reception of starving children, who were thereafter brought up in pious Vedic fashion. In the second of these famines upwards of seventeen hundred children were thus rescued.

On the caste problem the Arya Samaj does not take the out-and-out stand taken by the two younger branches of the Brahmo Samaj; yet it seeks to modify caste very considerably by encouraging interdining and intermarriage among the twice-born, and by insisting that caste should be (and in Vedic times was [1]), a matter of man's *nature*, not of his *birth*. Mr. Hansraj, one of the most prominent members of the Samaj, expressed it to me thus: "The important question about a man is what he is in himself, not what his father was. His nature, not his birth should settle his social status."

The logical corollary of this view of caste is an effort to uplift the outcaste; and in the preceding chapter we have seen the methods used by the Arya Samaj to make over the Untouchables into perfectly good Hindus. This is often done in wholesale fashion, the "mass methods" of the Christian missionaries being rivaled. Thus in one district an "untouchable" caste of ten thousand was admitted into the Arya Samaj in a body, and in another district some thirty-six thousand of another caste.[2] But the Samaj is not content with "converting" these outcastes; it has organized several societies to look after their education and uplift, the most important of which is the Depressed Classes Mission.

The Arya Samaj is strongly opposed to child marriage, although it has never taken the prominent part in the campaign against this evil which so distinguished the Brahmo Samaj in the days of Keshub Chunder Sen. The minimum

[1] In the *Satyarth Prakash*, Dayanand cites several passages from the Shastras to prove this. See pages 135–37 of the English translation. Cf. also Lajpat Rai, *op cit.*, pp. 137–43.

[2] See Lajpat Rai, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

marriageable age for girls it fixes at sixteen, and for boys at twenty-five. Widow remarriage is also permitted, but it is not approved except in the case of virgin widows. If the wife has really been a wife, the Samaj thinks she should be faithful to her husband's memory always.[1] This is a rather beautiful thought; but the odd part of it is that no such ideal fidelity is expected or desired of the widower.

But the Samaj has exerted more effort on education than upon philanthropy or social reform. "In the Punjab and the United Provinces its work," according to M. Rai, "in extent and volume, is second to no other agency except the Government. Christian Missions maintain a large number of schools of all kinds, but no single mission can claim to have as many schools for boys and girls as the Arya Samaj." [2] In addition to these numerous schools each branch of the Samaj (for there has been a division in the Church of the Aryas) maintains a college. The older of these, the Dayanand Anglo Vedic College of Lahore (commonly known as the "D.A.V."), is a large and flourishing institution, with many handsome buildings. It has 1737 students in the school department and 903 in the collegiate, "besides a number in the purely Vedic department, in the faculty of Hindu medicine, in the engineering and tailoring classes." [3] The faculty of the college is a group of very pleasant and cultured native gentlemen who understand the needs of the situation and give their students a modern and yet Indian education, with required courses in Sanskrit and the Vedic religion as taught by Dayanand. The purpose of the college is to crown the system of lower and middle schools which the Samaj conducts in various parts of the Punjab, and to give its students not only a good education but also rational and defensible religious ideas which shall yet be Indian.

The college of the other (the Gurukula) sect is a much more conservative and purely Indian institution.[4] Its founders disapproved of the western tone of the D.A.V. and sought to

[1] For Dayanand's reasons for this position see the *Satyarth Prakash*, p. 156.

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 179. [3] Lajpat Rai, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

[4] It is situated at Kangri, on the Ganges near Hardwar, and has about three hundred students, most of whom are in the school department.

imitate as far as possible the education of the Brahmachari in the good old Vedic days. "The boys when entering are usually of the age of seven or eight years. On entering, the boys take a vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience for sixteen years, and this vow they renew at the end of the tenth year. The pupils are not allowed to visit their homes during this long period of training, nor can their relations come to the school oftener than once a month." [1]

The Samaj has also a college for girls and a number of girls' schools. In all these schools, for both sexes, emphasis is laid upon religious training. Something also is done for the religious instruction of adults, for whose benefit several cheap editions of the ritual are published, with the Sanskrit verses transliterated and translated.[2] And more important still, they have the weekly meeting with its sermon, and the weekly and daily ritual of worship.

For though Dayanand regarded a moral life as the great road to salvation, he was not unaware of the utility of ritual in concentrating the attention upon religious thoughts and building up a religious and moral habit of mind. Hence he taught his followers to practice five daily duties, which are in part moral, in part ritualistic. They are the following: (1) Ritualistic washing, meditation, and the reciting of certain Sanskrit verses; (2) the "Agnihotra" or "Hawan" sacrifice to all na-

[1] Quoted by Mr. Rai from an article by Mr. Myron Phelps.

[2] The majority, of course, must stop their Sanskrit here and can hardly be expected to delve into the Vedas. This fact is a little embarrassing at times for an upholder of the Samaj: for, as one of them writes, they all take pride in being the only true followers of the Veda and regard the reading of the Veda a sacred duty. "But when cornered by some clever Muslim or Christian with the awkward question, 'Have you read the Vedas?' the majority can render no answer but that inscribed on their blank faces by blushes of ignorance." Nor would it be wise for the leaders to remedy this difficulty by putting into the hands of the people Griffith's or Wilson's translations of the Rik or Whitney and Lanman's translation of the Atharvan. Hence Mr. Gokul Chand has culled for their benefit certain proper verses from the hymns in a little book called the *Message of the Vedas;* and an authoritative translation is promised which will show up the absurd inaccuracies of Griffith, Max Müller, and the rest. But on the whole, it must be said that the Samaj is made up of very intelligent men and that its leaders are wide awake to the importance of education, for both the young and the old, and are doing much to make the Samaj a real power in the land and to keep it abreast of the times.

ture (to be explained presently); (3) ministering to the comfort of parents and elders; (4) feeding the poor (certain Sanskrit verses being said at the same time); (5) hospitality to sannyasins, religious teachers, etc. The second of these is of special interest, as being a deliberate adaptation of an ancient rite into a new and decidedly rationalistic religion, in part for the sake of the psychological and social effect upon the participants. Every good Arya is expected to perform it, or be present at its performance, at least once a day either in his home or in a public gathering. By good luck we happened to be in Lahore at the time of the thirty-sixth anniversary of the Samaj and were invited to see the public Agnihotra or Hawan ceremony with which the celebration of the day began. It was held in the large hall or court of the "Dayanand Anglo-Vedic Middle School," which except for a canopy was open to the sky. The walls were hung with familiar mottoes, in English and Hindu — such as Garrison's well-known (but here somewhat irrelevant) words: "I will not equivocate — I will not excuse — I will not retreat a single inch — and I will be heard"; and Watts's

> "Birds in their little nests agree
> But 't is a shameful sight
> When children of one family
> Fall out in chide and fight" (*sic*).

By the side of the speaker's platform there was a sort of arbor, with a banana tree at each corner, and in the center of it a pit perhaps two feet square and nearly as deep (in theory it should be sixteen inches by sixteen by sixteen). It was neatly plastered, apparently with cow-dung, and the borders of it decorated with colors. Near it was a pile of wood, a large brass dish full of *ghi* or liquefied butter, and two basins filled with a brown mixture of various substances — "odoriferous, nutritive, sweet, and curative." About fifteen men and boys took their places in the arbor and around the pit, and began by chanting a long series of Sanskrit hymns from the Vedas. The chanting was on three notes only, with much nasal pausing on *ms* and *ns;* it was done at first by memory, but for the later hymns books had to be consulted. Meanwhile the audience was coming in, consisting of forty or fifty men, perhaps a hun-

dred boys from the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic school (clean and happy-looking and all with pink turbans), and about a dozen women and young children who took their places behind a screen specially provided for them. The real ceremony now began. Four pieces of resinous material, of the shape and size of a pencil, were lighted and set up at the corners of the pit; a fire was built in the pit and started — the chanting continuing till the end of the performance. When the fire began to blaze one of the men poured a ladle of ghi into it and this act he repeated every few minutes. Meanwhile the bowls containing the brown and "curative" mixture were passed about and each of the boys and men by turns threw in a handful. Very little smoke was produced and hardly any odor. This process was continued till all the mixture and all the ghi were used up, when the chanting ceased and the ceremony ended. The following verses are translations of some of those chanted and will serve as samples of all the Arya prayers and hymns: —

"We offer to Him who is the soul of movable and immovable things, and who is the light of lights and life of all, so that this offering may be of service to all the creatures."

"We offer to Him who is the teacher of truth to learned people, and who is the life of all."

"We offer to Him who is self-glorious and the illuminer of the whole world."

"O God, we offer to Thee who art our life, knowledge, and motion."

"O God, we offer to Thee who art holiness, power, and space."

"O God, we offer to Thee who art self-existent, light, essence, immortality, supreme being, life, holiness, and happiness."

"O God, we offer to Thee, who art all in all."

The Samajists name several purposes in explaining this ceremony. Thus they say it emphasizes their connection with Vedic times (for, as I have said, it is an adaptation of a Vedic rite); it is a symbol of one's devotion to all the world, etc. But the first reason they will give you for it is that *it purifies the air*. Our bodies throw off certain poisonous excretions into the air and we owe it to nature to make this return. Dayanand wrote, "The vapor which, mixed with particles of fragrant things, goes up into the sky, purifies the water suspended in the air and also causes rain in greater abundance. This improves the quality of herbs, medicinal plants, corn and other vegetable productions. . . . There are many other benefits which accrue

from the performance of the ceremony. The wise can think them out for themselves." [1] Every good Arya believes implicitly that the air is very much better after the ghi has been burned; and both the school and the college open every day with the ceremony.

The Samaj holds regular weekly services on Sunday mornings — Sunday being chosen certainly not out of deference to Christianity, but because on that morning only are the various offices closed. The service is simple but very long — lasting three or four hours. Except for the ghi ceremony just described, it resembles closely the service in a Protestant Evangelical Church. The Samaj has no priesthood, and various members, qualified by education for the task, take turns in conducting the exercises. These consist, in addition to the ghi sacrifice, of a sermon, chanting from the Vedas, and prayers, some formal, some spontaneous and extempore. The Samaj is excellently organized. Every city and village under its influence has its own local Samaj, which possesses a good-sized meeting-house, and sends representatives to the Provincial Assembly. These Provincial Assemblies, in turn, send representatives to the All India Assembly. In theory any Hindu — whether natural or artificial — may become a member of the Arya Samaj; and there are methods and formulas by which even the Pariah or the foreigner may be made over into a Hindu for this purpose. "Effective membership involves (*a*) the acceptance of the Ten Principles; (*b*) the payment of one per cent. of one's income towards the revenues of the Samaj; (*c*) attendance at meetings; (*d*) right conduct." [2]

As the reader will have noted, the Arya Samaj is emphatically a national and Indian movement. It is to this that it owes its popularity and its rapid growth compared with the Brahmo Samaj. The Brahmo Samaj is too universal and also too Christian to please the average Hindu. It is on this ground especially that Dayanand attacked it. How, in fact, he asked, could one expect anything really good from people who do not accept the Vedas as inspired? "Thus to their hearts' content," he continues, "the Brahmoists cry down the glory of their

[1] Quoted from Dayanand by Bawa Chhajju Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
[2] Lajpat Rai, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

country and the greatness of its ancients, extol the English and Christians in their lectures, and assert that there have been no learned people in the world unto this day except the English." They have, however, he admits, done some good in "saving a few persons from being converted to Christianity." [1]

For the Arya Samaj recognizes the Christian missionaries as its greatest foes; and I may add, the Christian missionaries reciprocate the sentiment. Both are aggressive, both oppose idolatry and polytheism, both preach moral living as the means of salvation, and both rely on preaching of this sort in their appeal to the more intelligent, and especially to the young. Many of the missionaries will tell you that the aim of the Samaj is political and revolutionary rather than religious and moral and are hardly willing to give this Hindu devil its due. The Samajists, in their turn, arm themselves with arguments from the Rationalist Press Association and make every effort possible to counteract the work of the missionary. One of their popular tracts is entitled "Is not Christianity a False and Fabulous Religion?" And one missionary told me of a story he had heard in many villages and which he traced to the Samaj to the effect that Jesus was a bad man and once stole a donkey.

But toward the Hinduism of to-day, both popular and philosophical, the militant Samaj is hardly more friendly. True, it aims to bring about a purified and what it considers an ancient and true Hinduism; and, in the words of one of its exponents, "it does not aim at any future outside and beyond the pale of Hinduism." [2] But with the modern degenerate descendant of the ancient religion it has many quarrels. Its polytheism, its idolatry, its shraddha rites, its veneration of sacred places, and most of its books are all wrong. And so is also its narrowness — for the Arya Samaj would like to see not only all India but all the world within its fold, and unlike Hinduism it would gladly accept Europeans in its membership. And only less repugnant to it than the idolatry of the people is the pantheistic Vedanta of the philosophers and pundits. To the Arya, the so-called idealism of Shankara's philosophy is only

[1] *Satyarth Prakash*, p. 376.
[2] Lajpat Rai, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

materialism under a different name.[1] And for reasons very similar to these, the Aryas look at the Theosophist with considerable suspicion. One of them said to me, "Theosophy is trying to bring back and retain in Hinduism all the things — such as idolatry, shraddha rites, belief in ghosts, etc. — which we have been trying to abolish. Doubtless it has done some good work in India; but in its attempt to accept everything Indian it has filled itself with inconsistencies. It tries to say Yes, Yes, to every creed."

The Arya Samaj is still growing, especially in the Punjab and the United Provinces. Altogether it has about 250,000 members.[2] In the South of India the difference of language stands in the way of its missionary propagation, and in Bengal the Brahmo Samaj seems to have preëmpted the field. In 1893 the Samaj suffered a most unfortunate "split" on the food and education questions. The conservatives, who regarded Dayanand's opinions and example as authoritative, opposed the admission to membership of any who ate meat, and insisted that the education of the young should be less western and more "Vedic" than that given at the "D.A.V." As they could not persuade their brethren they branched off and have started many local Samajes and schools and (as we have seen) a college of their own. Although efforts at reconciliation have been repeatedly made, the division has not yet been healed. This, however, has by no means paralyzed the Samaj, which by means of pamphlets, weekly preaching services, schools, and its three colleges is still putting up a good fight and a fairly united front against the superstitious Hindu and the Christian missionary.

[1] Thus Mr. Hansraj said to me, "The Vedantist takes this material world, makes it one, and calls it 'God,' and thinks that thereby he has spiritualized it. As a fact if you do away with a personal God and make God identical with the material world which you *call* spiritual, you have *practically* nothing left but what the materialists have, unless you wish to cheat yourself with the name. God has really become merely matter. A 'God' who is not personal is not God at all."

[2] This is "two and a half times what it was in 1901, and six times that of 1891."

CHAPTER XI

THE RADHASOAMIS AND THEOSOPHISTS

PROBABLY the reader is by this time quite tired of Hindu reformers and all their works; in spite of which I mean to devote one more chapter to them. For I have found the two movements, the names of which I have put at the head of this chapter, of considerable interest; and moreover, one of them is almost unknown in the West, while the other has exercised a specially dominant influence on the developing thought of modern India.

The new religion now making considerable head in the United Provinces under the name the "Radhasoami Faith" is a very different kind of reform movement from the two Samajes, yet in some respects is even more typically Indian than they. It is interesting as a living example of the type of reform that so often arose in India before the influence of Christianity was felt in the land. It is purely religious in nature with no active social programme beyond a mild disapproval of caste restrictions; it recognizes but one God and no idols; has a purified form of worship based upon an elaborate psychology; regards its founder and leaders as incarnations of the Divine; and aims at freeing the soul from the flesh. It was founded by a Government employee in Agra,[1] named Shiva Dayal Singh, who evidently had done a good deal of independent thinking and felt the need of a purer form of worship, and who in 1861 made the discovery that he was an incarnation of the Supreme Being. He also discovered the true name of the Supreme Being and many other important and interesting things, some of which shall be related in due course. As was natural in India, he found no difficulty in persuading a considerable number of people that he was God in the flesh,[2]

[1] So, at least, I was informed by a member of the Satsang in Benares. According to Farquhar he was a banker.

[2] Such things need not seem strange to us Americans, at least, when we remember Joseph Smith, Prophet Elijah Dowie, and the "Holy Ghost and Us."

and thus he founded the new church and became its guru or "Maharaj." When he died in 1878 one of his followers, Rai Saligram Saheb Bahadoor by name, whom he had especially trained for the position, succeeded him as Incarnation of God and guru (or "Sant Satguru") of the religious community, under the name Huzoor Maharaj. This man was Postmaster-General of the Northwest Provinces.[1] He published the two vernacular books (one in verse, one in prose) which his predecessor had written, and wrote several himself (one of them in English), and died in 1898, passing on the leadership to Brahm Sankar Misra (who had "manifested" himself in 1861). Misra was a man of excellent education, holding the degree of M.A. from the Calcutta University and possessed of a clear and pleasing English style. He was for a time an employee in the office of the Accountant-General in Allahabad, and wrote a very readable book in English on the Radhasoami Faith. He died in Benares in 1907. His successor, Madhava Prasad, is not a "Sant Satguru" or absolute incarnation of the Supreme, but only a highly advanced adept. He makes his headquarters in Allahabad, where he is Chief Superintendent in the office of the Accountant-General. The new movement has steadily grown — chiefly in the United Provinces — and claims to have nearly a hundred thousand members. In point of numbers, therefore, it is almost on an equality with the Parsees.

This new faith claims to have the advantage over all other religions of being founded on "science" and perfectly demonstrable. And indeed, if reference to *nerve ganglia*, *ions*, and *positive* and *negative poles* — combined with excellent English

[1] Rai Saligram seems to have been both an able administrator and a really spiritual teacher. Max Müller gives a short account of him in his *Life of Ramakrishna*, including him among the five best-known Mahatmans of his time, along with Devendranath Tagore, Swami Dayanand, and Ramakrishna himself. He writes of him (*op. cit.*, p. 23), in 1898, just before the Guru died: "When last heard of, the old man was still alive, his house besieged every day by large numbers of persons both male and female, who flock there from different parts of the country. He holds five meetings day and night for the purpose of imparting religious instruction, so that he has hardly more than two hours left for sleep. Everybody is welcome, and no distinction is made between Brahman and Sudra, rich and poor, good and bad. The people are convinced that he can work miracles, but he himself regards such things as unbecoming, and below his dignity."

— prove the presence of science, the last book of the Maharajas is strictly scientific. But in common with the "Radhasoami Mat Prakash" of the second Maharaj, it has also the greater advantage of being infallibly inspired, — being written by God himself in the flesh. A brief résumé of the teachings of these two books should therefore certainly be of great interest to the reader.

God is the source or ocean of all force. He is Spirit-Force and from Him all natural forces come. He permeates the universe as sunlight pervades empty space, and our souls are part of Him, though for a while imprisoned in these material bodies. Now, "if the faculty of hearing is sufficiently developed all force currents could be heard as sounds." God being force can therefore be heard; and His true name will be the sound made by this Supreme Spirit-Force. The gurus of the new religion are able to hear this sound and tell us what it is. "The sound in articulate speech of the spirit-current is 'Radha,' and that of the spiritual focus or reservoir is 'Soami.' Radhasoami is accordingly held to be the true and real name of the Supreme Creator, and its sound, which resounds in the innermost quarter of all regions, can be heard by a devotee of the Radhasoami sect when the faculty of hearing inherent in his spirit is developed by the process of devotional practice prescribed by the Radhasoami Faith." [1]

There are in the universe three spheres. The highest of these is pure spirit and in it dwells Radhasoami (though present by his force-currents everywhere); the second, known as "Brahmand," is "spiritual-material"; the third is "material-spiritual." Each of these has six subdivisions. In the last dwells man — an immortal soul, or eternal and divine spark, in a material body. Man is a microcosm of the universe and has six principal nerve ganglia, corresponding to the six divisions of each sphere. His spirit, which is distinct from his mind, has its seat (Shades of Descartes!) on the highest of

[1] From the report of "Maharaj Saheb" (Brahm Sankar Misra) to the Census Office, printed as an appendix to his book, *Discourses on the Radhasoami Faith* (Benares, Radha Soami Satsang, 1909), p. 303. It is said that in their doctrine of the Divine Name and its importance the Radhasoamis have been influenced by the doctrine of the Word or *Logos* in St. John's Gospel.

these, namely, the *pineal gland* — "midway between the two eyes, three quarters of one inch from the root of the nose inwards." From this headquarters it perceives through the various sense-organs by sending out force-currents to them. But it also has relations with the upper worlds. "In the fissure between the two lobes of the brain are twelve apertures which provide the means of communication with the six subdivisions of Brahmand and of the purely spiritual region. The apertures appertaining to Brahmand are to be found in the gray matter, and those appertaining to the purely spiritual region in the white matter." [1] If man fails to make use of these channels for communion with the upper worlds he must continue to be born again and again indefinitely — for the new revelation teaches the old doctrine of transmigration. But the aim of man is to become free from the chains of the flesh and at length to attain to pure spirituality and to return to God who is our home.

A moral life is, of course, essential to attaining this aim, but it is only the first step. Certain methods for enabling the soul to quit the body temporarily, or hold communion with the upper spheres during this present life, are taught by the new faith, and the practice of these, carried on through this and several more incarnations, will enable the individual at length to win perfect spiritual freedom from all body. To learn these methods there is need of a guru who is himself in communication with one of the upper worlds. There have been many such gurus or adepts; but there were never any *incarnations* until, the ground for the spiritual regeneration of man having been prepared by the advent of these various lesser gurus and adepts, Radhasoami sent down rays from his very self which assumed human form in the first Maharaj. The Radhasoami Faith must therefore not be considered in any sense a reform or an offshoot of Hinduism, or as in any way a product of human traditions or cogitations. Says the second Sant Satguru in his authoritative work, "The Radhasoami Faith is not built on the basis of scriptures appertaining to Hindu or any other religion, but on the precepts or instructions of the Supreme Being Himself, Who appeared on this earth in human

[1] *The Radhasoami Faith*, p. 65.

form and graciously performed the functions of a Sant Satguru for the benefit of degraded humanity."[1] Such an incarnation is a kind of focus of the divine rays and "carries on, by the deity's direct impulse, the work appertaining to the object for which the incarnation was ordained." There have been but three such incarnations, namely, the three Maharajas of the Radhasoami Faith. They alone of religious teachers come directly from the first or purely spiritual region. "All [other] extant religions have for their goal the second or spiritual-material region which is subject to decay and dissolution. This region is not clearly mentioned in the tenets of the extant religions, but allusions and hints about it are to be found in their holy books. Only one initiated in esoteric teachings can comprehend these hints. But such adepts are very rare, and only those initiated in the Radhasoami Faith can at present understand the esoteric teachings of all other religions also, and form a correct idea of the attitude of each."[2]

The importance of a living guru to aid the disciple in ascending to these dizzy heights is now plain. The Radhasoamis think (and with good reason) that the Sikhs and the followers of Kabir have degenerated just because they have so long been without a living guru; and they are determined to profit by the mistakes of their predecessors and never be any length of time without an incarnation of the Deity or at least an adept who has climbed to the top of the second spiritual sphere. "The ascension of a spirit from its ordinary seat to higher planes is possible only when a living adept is present. It is not necessary that the disciple must always be in the personal company of the adept. So long as the adept is alive, his spirituality is kinetic on higher planes and he can extend help even when the disciple is away from him at a distance."[3]

There are three great methods by which the soul may begin its ascent toward the upper regions. These are "(1) utterance of the spiritual name by the spirit-current; (2) contemplation of the spiritual form; and (3) attentively listening to the spiritual sound." Each of these methods is based on "Science."

[1] Rai Saligram Bahadur, *Radhasoami Mat Prakash* (Benares, Chandraprabha Press, 1896), p. 13.

[2] *The Radhasoami Faith*, pp. 309–10.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

Since every force has its sound, by reproducing the sound of a spirit-force we may gain some of the power of that force and by tuning, as it were, our soul and body to that sound we may put ourselves into harmony with it. My exposition here I confess is very unscientific, but the interested reader will consult the sources. The effects to be attained by proper repetition of the holy syllables are certainly remarkable. "All obstacles thrown in the way and traps laid by Universal Mind and Matter to stop or interfere with the progress of a pilgrim to the high mansions of the Supreme Being in pure spiritual regions disappear at once on the pronunciation of the Holy Name Radhasoami by the devotee; such is the immediate effect and beneficial influence exercised by this Almighty Name. It at once strikes awe and terror in the heart of the conflicting agents and revolting forces met with by the devotee while traversing the material regions and gradually removes them altogether from his path." [1] As to the second of the methods — contemplation — it is a well-known fact that we grow like that which we willingly contemplate, and also that spiritual facts get themselves recorded in facial expression. "The outward marks are specially noticeable on the forehead and in the eyes of an adept, and the effect of these marks on advanced devotees in producing concentration and sublimation of spirit is very remarkable." And the effect of contemplating an incarnation is, of course, doubly great. Hence the practice of gazing at the Maharaj, or, during an interregnum, at the pictures of past Maharajas. The third method — that of listening attentively to the spiritual sound — is the most difficult of the three, and only the more advanced can really succeed in hearing it. Yet it is quite possible; for *Radhasoami*, "the true Name, is present everywhere in creation and can be heard at the innermost plane where the spirit-current is acting. As each ray from the sun carries with it the constitutional components of the sun, similarly the prime action by focus and current, which are the constitutional components of creation in the beginning, is carried in the tiniest ray of spirit, and the sound, Radhasoami, could be heard in miniature if we could penetrate the surrounding layers and reach the

[1] *Radhasoami Mat Prakash*, p. 2.

innermost quarter occupied by the spirit-ray."[1] There is something rather beautiful in this conception that, were the hearing of our spirit not deadened by its enwrapping mortal coil, we should hear everywhere throughout the universe whispered the name of God.

> "There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest
> But in his motion like an angel sings,
> Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
> Such harmony is in immortal souls;
> But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
> Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

There are centers of the Radhasoami Faith at Agra, Allahabad, and Benares. Their building in the latter city is one of the most prominent in town. It is situated in a beautiful garden, which is carefully and tastefully kept up. The building itself consists of a large hall, with a screened gallery at one end and a marble platform at the other — in short, it has much the appearance of a Protestant church. There are, of course, no idols or anything of the sort, the room being quite bare except for large pictures of the three departed gurus. The ashes of the last of the three rest beneath the marble platform from which he used to teach; while at the sides of the platform are two small rooms each of which contains his picture and also a large divan. On these divans the late guru used to sit, in Oriental fashion, while teaching the inner circle of his disciples, and hence they are regarded as being full of spiritual magnetism and as sending out ethereal vibrations.

Twice a day the faithful gather in this hall for public service — at morning and evening. The women sit in the screened gallery, the men on the floor, and one of their number, standing at the reading-desk on the floor, reads to them from some inspired book written by one of the great gurus. For as I have said, though they reverence the Vedas they regard only the writings of the incarnations of Radhasoami as really inspired and authoritative. No one but the guru may teach from the platform and the present guru is at Allahabad. The following

[1] *The Radhasoami Faith*, p. 152. The details of the three methods as actually practiced are not made public, but are divulged to members of the sect on initiation.

description of a service at which the guru presides is from the inspired pen of the last guru himself: —

"The service commences with the recitation, in which all the members of the congregation can take part, of certain holy pieces which contain a grateful expression of the immense spiritual benefit conferred by the gracious Supreme Creator in revealing the true path of salvation. . . . The service closes with another recitation of the description given above, but the subject-matter of the holy pieces is different. . . . The holy books compiled by the Saints are also read out. Such portions of these books as do not admit of easy comprehension are explained by the presiding adept, or made the text of a holy discourse. Other discourses also are frequently delivered. . . . While the books are being read out the members of the congregation are simultaneously attentive, to some extent, to their devotional practice, especially of contemplation, which is rendered easy in consequence of the inspired subject-matter of the holy books they are listening to. Concurrently with this, the process for the purification of mind and the eradication of evil desires is also at work. The root of all evils is ignorance. In the presence of a Saint this ignorance is dispelled to some extent, and his serene and sacred company is at times alone sufficient to disclose the shortcomings of the members of the congregation, and to generate true contrition. . . . The surroundings of the *satsang* [the meeting], the presence of the adept and his discourses, produce also great effect upon the faculty of religious emotion, and as the devotee makes progress in his spiritual practice, gradually the satsang affords such exquisite emotional ecstasies to him that all pleasures of this world dwindle into insignificance and the entire service is one of engrossing rapture. . . . The presiding adept is sometimes garlanded before the commencement of the service, and garlands sanctified by his touch are distributed to the members of the congregation. Sweets or some other light article of food are also sometimes distributed after sanctification by the adept. They constitute, as it were, the sacrament of the satsang." [1]

For an elect, inner circle there are additional means of

[1] *The Radhasoami Faith*, pp. 125–30.

spiritual assistance. "Articles of food left in the dishes after an adept has finished his meals, clothes and garments worn by him, and the water used for the ablution of his feet, are considered to be highly spiritualized, and used by such of the disciples as get an opportunity to obtain them. Disciples are also sometimes allowed to touch the feet of an adept with their forehead, the object being that the spirituality, which is more or less flowing out from the feet of the adept, might be imbibed by them. . . . At times disciples are permitted to gaze intently at the eyes of an adept, and he also directs his gaze similarly at the eyes and forehead of the devotees engaged in this practice. . . . The spiritual concentration during such moments is very great, and the devotees who are performing this practice are filled within themselves with rapturous bliss." [2]

Only the more advanced may enjoy the great privilege of using the water in which an adept has bathed his feet; but admission to the outer circle of membership is open to all, without reference even to caste. The Radhasoami Faith has room even for the despised sweeper, and within its hospitable walls distinctions of birth are thrown aside and only spirituality counts. "The only conditions required for embracing the Radhasoami religion are abstinence from meat and animal food and liquor and all intoxicating drugs, and a conviction that the goal of the Radhasoami Faith is the only true goal of true and perfect salvation."

Yet the sect makes no active attack upon caste or upon any other social evil. The morality which it preaches is pure but is of a decidedly negative nature. This is rather forcibly brought out in the late guru's second report to the Census Bureau, in which he says: "The moral code of the Radhasoami Faith consists, so far as our actions toward others are concerned, in withholding ourselves from such acts as we would that others should not do to us."

The truth is, the Radhasoamis are emphatically *Quietists*. Mystic cultivation of their own souls is their great aim, and active social work is regarded as dangerous. The writer of the Prefatory Note in the book from which I have so often quoted tells us that "Maharaj Saheb [the late guru] always impressed

[1] *The Radhasoami Faith*, pp. 130–32.

upon the members of the Radhasoami Faith the necessity of abstaining from taking part in public assemblies (especially political ones), as such participation would always result in some spiritual loss." [1] And the guru himself gives us as the one great evil consequence of eating animal food the fact that "it generates outward activity and energy"!

This point of view was so characteristic of native Indian ethics before it was influenced by Christianity that I hope I shall be pardoned if I set down here a further illustration of it — a conversation I had with a member of the Radhasoami Faith. I shall put it down in the form of question and answer as it actually occurred: —

Q. "Does your religion aid in the moral life?"

A. "Yes, greatly — by helping us to overcome the flesh. A pure life is the prerequisite of progress according to our teaching."

Q. "Does your religion tend to make one helpful to other people? — For instance: Yesterday I saw a little girl of perhaps eight who danced for me. She will almost certainly grow up to be a public woman unless some one tries to save her from it. Does your religion teach you or inspire you to help and save that little girl?"

A. "Oh, no. That sort of thing is very secondary. Our religion aims at the one thing of great importance, the development and salvation of soul. We believe that charity begins at home — and this not in a selfish sense. We cannot help others till we have attained to a high spiritual condition ourselves, just as a poor man must first become rich before he can be a benefactor. Our first duty is to save our own souls; and this takes all our time. It is no easy thing to practice our system and to develop our souls, and it requires all our thought and effort."

Q. "Have any of you — even your gurus — developed so far that they have had time for such things as I have mentioned — saving little girls?"

A. "The little girl must learn by trying which is the best way — though of course she might be told the truth by others. No one can save the little girl but herself. She will learn just

[1] Page xv.

as the child learns to avoid the fire — by putting his hand in and getting burned. [He would probably have added that in her long series of lives she would have plenty of opportunity for learning and profiting by her sad experience.] We can do nothing for her, except perhaps point out the laws of life and the effects of vice and virtue."

Q. "Do you do this? Do you make any attempts at proselyting and communicating your fine religion to others? Do you ever actually warn the little girl?"

A. "We do no public preaching or proselyting. When people come to us and inquire about our doctrines we gladly answer their questions. And we offer them our books for sale."

Yet I fear I have done but scant justice by the Radhasoamis. To be sure, they do little for others beyond showing them an example of relatively pure and peaceful lives. But after all, is that not something? And with all their pseudo-science and their strange "spiritual" methods, they do at least nourish a very genuine aspiration after a purer, nobler life than they have yet found in themselves. Sad, is it not, that in their search for an ideal who shall lift them above themselves, in their longing for an Incarnation of the Divine, they can see no further than the self-deluded clerk in the Government Office at Agra! [1]

[1] In all fairness to the followers of the Radhasoami Faith I ought again to warn the reader against the natural prejudice with which we Westerners are likely to read an account of a religion so strange to us as this is. I should also add that in a letter which I recently received from the present leader of the Faith he says, among other things: "I may tell you at the outset that we are not at all interested in the presentation of our religion in a book dealing with the religions of India, and we disclaim all responsibility for anything that you are to say regarding our religion in the book you are writing. The subject is so vast and technical that it requires a training for some considerable time followed by actual experimentation by means of spiritual practices before one can be expected to comprehend and appreciate the teachings of our religion at their true worth. . . . At present we doubt very much if our religion will be sympathetically and appreciatively received by people of the West."

The Radhasoami Faith may seem odd to most of us and downright silly to some; but let not our Anglo-Saxon pride lead us into saying, with self-conscious superiority, "Lo the poor Indian!" The very newest of the "New Thought" of our up-to-date West is capable of things not so very different. Thus the July 1915 number of the New York *Key to Fundamentals; A Magazine of Revelations of the Underlying Principles of Nature, Life and Mind*, announces that "it will serve as a guide to those that seek

And now, if the reader's patience can hold out a little longer, we shall soon have done with Hindu reformers; for we have only one more to consider, a reform movement, this, inaugurated and carried on by Europeans, who quite out-Hindu the Hindus. I refer to the Theosophical Society, commonly known as the "T. S." The Society was founded in the same year as the Arya Samaj — 1875 — by Madame H. P. Blavatsky and Colonel H. S. Olcott, two rather remarkable personages, both of whom were convinced that the fundamental truths about God and man were common to all religions and that these truths were capable of considerable verification by means of "occult science." Madame Blavatsky (commonly referred to in Theosophical circles as "H. P. B.") was particularly noted for her writings on religious and occult matters, while "H. S. O.," as President of the Society, was specially active in the movement to interpret and build up the ancient religions of the East. His successor as President of the T. S. to-day is Mrs. Annie Besant, and the Society counts over a thousand active lodges in twenty-three National Sections, sprinkled all over the world under some thirty different governments, with a total membership of about twenty-five thousand.

The aims of the Society are threefold: "(1) To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color; (2) to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science; (3) to investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man." "The Theosophical Society is composed of students belonging to any religion in the world or to none, who are united by their approval of the above objects, by their wish to remove religious antagonisms, and to draw together men of good-will whatsoever their religious opinions, and by their desire to study religious truths and to share the results of their studies with others." [1]

psycho-spiritual development with a view to attaining mastership on that plane of expression. It will serve as the organ of the American School of Vibration. Its chief distinction will be its suggestions for the realization of the reciprocal counterpoise of the so-called 'normal' or material plane of activity, and of the super-normal or ethereal plane . . . by imparting a knowledge of the Law of Inversion." Surely here is a flower that might have bloomed from the Radhasoami stalk!

[1] *Information for Enquirers* (Adyar T. P. S., 1912).

THE RADHASOAMIS AND THEOSOPHISTS

Theosophy and the Theosophical Society are not interchangeable terms. Theosophy is the teachings of the T. S.: but not all members of the Society need accept them, for perfect freedom of thought is always encouraged. As a matter of fact, however, practically all members of the T. S. agree on the more fundamental teachings — otherwise they would hardly be Theosophists. As these teachings are closely bound up with the religions of India a word or two should be said concerning them.

"Theosophy is the body of truths which forms the basis of all religions." This first sentence in the Society's official exposition of Theosophy gives its fundamental point of view. The implications of this sentence are important. There are certain fundamental truths on which all religions are agreed, and these when put systematically together will form the religious philosophy of Humanity, which is Theosophy. Says Mrs. Besant in the Introduction to her "Universal Textbook of Religion and Morals": "There are fundamental doctrines, symbols, rites, precepts, which are common to all, while the lesser variants are innumerable. It thus becomes possible to separate the essential from the non-essential, the permanent from the transitory, the universal from the local, and to find *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus.* When this is done we have remaining a fundamental religious and moral teaching which may fearlessly be given to the young, as the expression of facts concerning God, Man, and the Universe borne witness to by the elect of Humanity, as being capable of verification by all who reach a certain spiritual stage of evolution."

This is certainly a very admirable programme and every liberal-minded religious man will wish the T. S. God-speed in carrying it out — if such a thing be possible. The Theosophists think it not only possible but already easily accomplished; and accordingly Mrs. Besant presents us with a list of propositions as the creedal points of Theosophy which all religions teach. The two most fundamental of these are the immanence of God in man and the brotherhood of all men. "Its secondary teachings are those which are the common teachings of all religions, living or dead: the Unity of God; the triplicity of His nature in manifestation; the descent of spirit in matter, and hence the graded ranks of Intelligences, whereof humanity

is one; the growth of humanity by the unfoldment of consciousness and the evolution of bodies, i.e., reincarnation; the progress of this growth under inviolable law, i.e., Karma; the environment of this growth, i.e., the three worlds, the physical, emotional, and mental, or earth, the intermediate world, and heaven; the existence of divine Teachers, superhuman men, often called the White Brotherhood."

Possibly not all the items in this summary are perfectly clear to the reader: but I shall simply say that the reincarnation and Karma of the T. S. are merely what we have studied under those names in Hinduism; that the White Brotherhood is that "Occult Hierarchy" which "governs the world" and whose members occasionally become incarnate, and even when not incarnate may be "found" by members of the T. S. (it was, in fact, one of them residing in Thibet, "Koot Hoomi" by name, who revealed Theosophy to Madame Blavatsky, and who on various critical occasions has sent letters and telegrams to the leaders of the Society for their guidance); and as to the many worlds, there are seven of them — the Physical, Astral, Heavenly, Buddhic, Atmic-Nirvanic, Monadic, and the World of the Logos. The last two of these Mrs. Besant says "are so far above our present power of conception that, for the moment, they may be left out of consideration" (!). But the others, and in fact all the rest of the teachings of the T. S. mentioned above, are matters "not of speculation but of observation and experiment." It may be a revelation to the reader that primitive Animism teaches the One Spiritual and Immanent God and the brotherhood of men; that Islam teaches the Trinity; that Buddhism teaches the Supreme God and the eternal identity of the soul with Him; and that Christianity teaches transmigration and Karma. The truth is, this reconciliation of all the creeds has been so constructed as to make it appear that all religions are mere variants upon a Vedantic Hinduism with an occult interpretation. This, at least, is true of the Theosophy of the Indian section with which alone we are here concerned. Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, and "esoteric Buddhism" have contributed certain superficial marks; but the heart of Indian Theosophy is a kind of occult and mystic Hinduism.

It is for this reason that the T. S. has had so large an influence in India. This influence has been in many respects admirable. There is a goodly number of Theosophist missionaries in India who have gone at their work in humble and earnest fashion; deeply religious souls who see that there is in Hinduism much that may be made ennobling, and who are endeavoring by publications, schools, and personal influence to reveal to Hindu girls and boys, men and women, a loftier outlook and a purer life than they ever caught sight of before. These Theosophist missionaries have not necessarily ceased to be Christians; but they feel that there is more hope of success in teaching the Indian the inner meaning and the spiritual side of the religion into which he was born, than in indoctrinating him into a new religion which is foreign to his land. I know some of these earnest souls — women and men who are devoting their lives to the humble task of teaching little brown girls and boys and trying to make them into men and women of larger vision than their parents were. And there can be no doubt that many a Hindu to-day is a more intelligent man and a better man because of the work of the Theosophical Society. In every part of India you meet with men who will tell you that their first insight into a more spiritual interpretation of the rites and beliefs of their native religion came to them through some Theosophist or through reading some of the periodicals put out by the T. S. For the Society publishes several periodicals of an educative nature, some for children, some for adults. It has also a considerable number of schools[1] in which systematic education in the better side of Hinduism is given to every Hindu pupil. And the Central Hindu College at Benares (to which reference has already been made) was until the spring of 1913 a Theosophist institution.

In their attempt at spiritualizing Hinduism the Theosophists are naturally led into an imaginative reconstruction of the past and a symbolical interpretation of texts and customs that inevitably rouse the wonder of the uninitiated. Krishna with his sixteen thousand concubines is made into an angel of

[1] The Theosophical Educational Trust (founded in April, 1913) has under its management fifteen schools, with 2,608 girls and boys, and 122 teachers. Beside these (which are all in India) the Society maintains a large number of schools in Burma.

purity, compared with whom even Buddha and Jesus seem quite inferior, and the vilest stories are twisted into moral tales; for symbolism covereth a multitude of sins. There would be no great harm in this, perhaps, if the matter stopped here; but it does not. In their enthusiasm over everything Hindu, the T. S. has not hesitated to defend even such things as polytheism, idolatry, shraddha, and various beliefs and rites which to most of us seem hardly elevating. The defense is occasionally psychological, more often occult, and in many cases simply authoritative. If one is to understand conditions in India to-day it is important to realize to what extent the influential Theosophical Society has adopted the Hindu view of things such as those named above and what kind of teachings it is spreading throughout the land. Take, for example, the topic on which the T. S. lays such repeated stress — "vibrations" and "mantras." The Hindu student is assured by Mrs. Besant in her books of instruction that "modern science" (together with the eternal Veda) teaches that the soul or *jiva* is surrounded by various sheaths of gross and subtle matter; that both it and they are in constant motion and are ever sending out vibrations and being influenced by other vibrations; and that the recitation of certain mantras produces vibrations that have most marvelous effects on all sorts of gross and subtle matter and upon the welfare of souls living and dead. "A mantra is a sequence of sounds, and these sounds are vibrations, so that the chanting, loud or low, or the silent repetition, of a mantra sets up a certain series of vibrations. . . . The forms created by a mantra depend on the notes on which the mantra is chanted; the mantra, as it is chanted, gives rise to a series of forms in subtle matter. The nature of the vibrations — that is, their general character, whether constructive or destructive, whether stimulating love, energy, or other emotions — depends on the *words* of the mantra."[1] It follows, of course, that the mantra must be recited in its original Sanskrit form, else it would fail to produce the desired vibrations. The mantras, moreover, must be chanted at certain magically favorable *times*,[2] else their effect is considerably

[1] *Advanced Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics*, pp. 166, 167.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 216.

reduced. If properly recited they have marvelous effects; and Mrs. Besant teaches that the present "great loss in health and vigor" of the Indian race is largely due to the fact that mantras are no longer chanted, as in the good old days, over prospective mothers before the birth of their children.[1]

The souls of the departed, no less than children yet unborn, may be reached by the marvelous vibrations of Vedic mantras, as well as by other traditional Hindu ceremonies. Hence the justification of funeral and shraddha rites, according to Mrs. Besant's instruction to Hindu boys as found in a little book of hers which is "intended to help them answer the attacks leveled against their religion." From this we learn that the fire which consumes the physical body on the burning ghat also aids in breaking up the "etheric body"; and "the sacred mantras," which form a part of the cremation ceremony, "fill the air with waves of energy that protect and calm him and that loosen the clinging etheric body so that it falls away from him." The soul is now a "preta" ("*ghost* would be the nearest English equivalent," says Mrs. Besant); and here the shraddha ceremony comes in. "The vibrations of the mantras in the subtle matter that surrounds us are like waves that wash up against the body of the preta, washing away the coarser matter, and quickening the disintegration of the preta form. The water poured out with mantras and magnetized by them imparts its helpful magnetism to the preta form also."[2]

In similar fashion the T. S. has taken up the defense of idolatry. On the front of her house at Benares Mrs. Besant has a large Ganesha, and though presumably she does not worship it herself, she encourages her Hindu followers to make use of images of the gods in their devotions. She assures them that the contemplation of such an image — let us say Hanuman or Kali or a lingam — will help them to concentrate their minds on God. But the chief argument for idolatry is that the idol shares some of the "magnetism" of the god it represents, once the proper mantras have been said and the proper liquids, etc., poured over it by "a highly evolved person" such as a

[1] *Advanced Textbook of Hindu Religion and Ethics*, p. 172.

[2] Reprinted by Mrs. Besant in her little book *In Defence of Hinduism* (Benares T. P. S.), pp. 33–37.

Brahmin priest. "You don't," — she tells the Hindus, — "you don't take an ordinary image and use it in worship straightaway. On the contrary, you subject it to a divine ceremony. You recite over it certain mantras, you use certain objects, you pour certain liquids, and it is only after all this ceremony has been performed that the image becomes sacred and fit to be used for the purposes of worship. . . . Thus you have been magnetizing your image." [1] And again: "The pure and soothing magnetism spreads around it [the idol], creating a most helpful atmosphere. . . . Such a prepared center is very readily strengthened and revivified by the Being whose magnetism already is present there, and the prayer or meditation of the worshiper drawing His attention, He sends an answering current through the center already made." [2]

The above quotations will serve as an indication of the attitude of the Indian Theosophical Society toward what most of us Westerners in our blindness are in the habit of calling superstitions. For we, unfortunately, are not endowed with Mrs. Besant's mystic powers of investigation, nor are we in communication with Koot Hoomi, He of the Great White Brotherhood residing in Thibet. Probably one reason for Mrs. Besant's acceptance of everything Hindu is her sublime confidence in the revelations of "Occult Science." An ineradicable hankering after the occult has in fact been the passion and the bane of Theosophy ever since its birth. One would suppose that Richard Hodgson's exposure of Madame Blavatsky's tricks [3] would have been enough to sicken the Theosophists of that sort of thing; but apparently it had very little effect, at least in India. Veneration for H. P. B. is still as profound as ever, and the longing for the super-normal, super-physical, super-natural, super-everything is still unsatisfied. Mrs. Besant is no trickster, but she has the same appetite for the hyper-

[1] "Speeches at Trivandrum," quoted by Farquhar, *Crown of Hinduism*, p. 336.

[2] *In Defence of Hinduism*, p. 5. Mrs. Besant adds: "Any one who has studied magnetism according to the European methods will at once see this aspect of an idol, and will recognize the scientific wisdom of the Eastern Sages in sanctioning the use of images."

[3] See "Report of the Committee appointed to investigate Phenomena connected with the Theosophical Society," in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, vol. III (London, Trübner, 1885), pp. 201–400.

physical that distinguished her predecessor. She is ambitious of developing telepathic powers, and in fact has become an adept in reading the thoughts of the people on Mars. Very wisely she confines her attention to Mars, and specializes only in long-distance telepathy. At the annual meeting of the T. S. in Benares last year, I heard her declare (with great solemnity and amid loud applause) that the Veda was eternal; that the Upanishads were brought into India by the "Toltecs," the ancient inhabitants of the sunken continent of Atlantis, at the time when India was raised from the bed of the ocean; and that she knew this because "occult research" had "recovered" a large part of "the ancient Toltec literature."

If the reader is interested to learn more of the "results of occult research," he will be able to satisfy the most rapacious appetite in a book recently issued by Mrs. Besant and Mr. C. W. Leadbeater entitled "Man, Whence, Why, and Whither. A Record of Clairvoyant Investigation." [1] This book contains the history of the universe from the earliest times onward. A few sentences from it, taken entirely at haphazard, will indicate its nature: —

"On Mars in the fourth Round we find a number of savages who had not been sufficiently advanced to leave that globe for the Earth when the mass of the egos went on in the preceding Round. . . . Mars in the fourth Round felt a scarcity of water and it was the Lords of the Moon who planned out the system of canals," etc.

"The civilization of Peru in the thirteenth millennium B.C. so closely resembled that of the Toltec Empire in its zenith that," etc.

"From the small beginning of 60,000 B.C. there gradually grew up a thickly populated kingdom which surrounded the Gobi Sea. . . . This was the root-stock of all Aryan nations, and from it went out — from 40,000 B.C. onwards — the great migrations which formed the sub-Aryan races."

Having at last got the universe up to the year 1913 A.D., Mrs. Besant's clairvoyant powers seem to be exhausted. But not so Mr. Leadbeater's. The distant future offers no more difficulties to him than the thirteenth millennium B.C.; and

[1] Published by the T. P. S., 1913.

throughout Part III (entitled "Whither") he takes his prophetic course, while nations fall and continents subside, —

> "Unhurt amid the wars of elements,
> The wrecks of matter, and the crush of worlds." [1]

The most interesting part of the book to me is the Preface, for this describes the method by which the "research work" was carried on. Mrs. Besant writes: —

"The research work was done at Adyar in the summer of 1910; in the heat of the summer many of the students were away, and we shut ourselves up so as to be uninterrupted, for five evenings every week; we observed and said exactly what we saw, and two members were good enough to write down all we said exactly as we said it. In order to throw ourselves back into the earliest stages we sought for our own consciousness, present there, and easier to start from than anything else, since no others were recognizable. They gave us, as it were, a footing in the first as second chains." And she adds, with a truthfulness that surely no one can dispute: "Work of this kind might be done *ad libitum* if there were people to do it."

After reading things of this sort it is not surprising to learn that the T. S. is losing its hold on many of its more intelligent members. Already in 1895 a large portion of the American Theosophists had left the Society and founded an independent organization known as the "Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society." The rebellion was led by Mr. Judge, formerly Vice-President of the T. S., who upon Madame Blavatsky's death was favored with a large number of letters from the Great White Brotherhood in Thibet, indicating him as the suitable President of the Society in place of Colonel Olcott; but the Colonel, who was very familiar with the handwriting of the Thibetan Sages, insisted that Judge's letters were forgeries; and there was nothing left for the former Vice-President to do but form a new Society of his own and get what comfort he could from the love-letters of Koot Hoomi and his Thibetan Brothers. In 1909 another split in the T. S.

[1] Prophecy is not a new development in the T. S. The great H. P. B. set the example in her famous book, "The Secret Doctrine," in which new "sub-races" and "root-races" through "long millenniums" arise and play their parts before the eyes of those enlightened by Theosophic vision.

occurred, some seven hundred British Theosophists withdrawing from the Society in protest against the readmission of Mr. Leadbeater, who four years previously had been expelled because of various immoral teachings and practices of which he had been found guilty.[1] And quite recently nearly all the German Theosophists, under the leadership of Dr. Rudolf Steiner, have broken away and founded an independent organization, the "Anthroposophical Society." Even in the Indian Section the feeling of discontent and criticism is present,[2] and it has been brought to a climax by Mrs. Besant's recent attempt to present Hinduism with a new Messiah in the form of a rather commonplace native boy, whose father had entrusted him to her charge, and whom she had entrusted to Mr. Leadbeater for education. Her surprising revelation that this young gentleman was the latest representative of the Deity carried occultism too far for even the patient Indian.

Thus the influence of the Theosophical Society has suffered a great check. Its most important institution, the Central Hindu College, has declared its independence. Many of the ablest and most important Indian Theosophists are sadly abandoning the Society. And it would hardly be surprising if we should find patriotic Hindus devoutly praying to all their gods that the T. S., together with the writings of H. P. B. and H. S. O. — yes, and even those of A. B. and C. W. L. — might be wafted sweetly and swiftly on occult breezes to the land of the ancient Toltecs.

For in spite of the unmistakable good that the Theosophical Society has done in India its influence has had two results that are quite as unmistakably evil. In the first place, at this time when India is just awakening to modern thought and is in such need of careful guidance, Theosophy has not only encouraged most of its old superstitions, but has taught it to identify science with obscurantism and occultism and to found the new structure of its faith on those very shifting

[1] See Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements in India*, pp. 268–70, 274.

[2] A Bengalee Brahmin, whose opinion of Theosophy I asked, answered with a smile: "It has done something for the less intelligent Hindus: but really Theosophy is child's play."

sands. And what is perhaps more dangerous still, in its blind effort to attack "materialism" it has brought the spirit into contempt and derision by spreading abroad the view that "spirituality" means a belief in psychic planes, vibrations, magnetism, and mantras. Surely not thus shall we triumph over "materialism." Surely not such is the message that shall set the spirit free.

CHAPTER XII

THE KABIR PANTHIS AND THE SIKHS

THE reader of Æschylus's "Agamemnon" will recall how the news of the fall of Troy was flashed by signal fires on mountain-tops all around the Ægean, from Mount Ida, by way of Lemnos, Athos, Cithæron, and many another height, until at last it reached the summit of Arachne and the royal palace in Argos. In fashion no less striking surely has the torch of spiritual insight been handed down through the generations of men. We all know how true this has been of Greece, Israel, and the modern West; and in India also the same story has been repeated through the ages. The spiritual light first kindled in the Upanishads has leaped across dark centuries from peak to blazing peak, speaking ever in words of flame the same eternal message which India has loved so well.

In a previous chapter we saw how the teachings of the Upanishads were systematized by Shankara in the ninth century, and in the eleventh century united by Ramanuja with the more theistic doctrines of the Bhagavad Gita. Ramanuja's is one of the greatest names in all the history of "bhakti" — that intense personal devotion for a personal God which has had so much more influence over the Indian people than even the orthodox philosophy of Shankara, and which (despite many points of controversy) shares with the more abstruse Vedanta that most basal of all Indian conceptions, the union of the human soul with the Divine. The light that streamed from Ramanuja was caught up and handed on to many a lofty soul through India's history. Perhaps the most important of the spiritual leaders influenced directly by Ramanuja's teaching was his fifth successor as head of the Vaishnavite order founded by him. This man was named Ramanand, who lived in the fourteenth century. He was one of those men, all too rare in India though never wholly wanting, who was unwilling to

divorce religion from the welfare of society, and whose devotion to God made him all the more devoted to his fellow men. Consequently he was among the foremost of his time to raise his voice against caste; and being put out of his own order for this offense he founded a new one, which should have room for all. He was a man of large and democratic spirit and of profound religious earnestness as well, not forgetting in his reforming zeal the devotion to Rama (his name for God) which he had learned from his great predecessor. "He spoke to the people in their simple dialect, and among the twelve apostles that he chose to help him in his work were a leather-worker, a barber, a Mohammedan weaver, and a woman. From Ramanand there went forth a mighty current of religious feeling which still is not wholly extinguished. He preached the gospel of Rama's boundless love for men of every race, order, or creed. His sect is still numerous in northern India, chiefly among the poorer classes, and the poems of Tulsi Das, a product of the Ramananda revival, are the Bible of many millions in the Hindi country. Caste has reasserted its power over them, but the ideal remains." [1]

Ramanand spent most of his life in Benares; and tradition says that one of his disciples in that sacred city was Kabir, whose life extended through the larger part of the fifteenth century. Both Hindus and Mohammedans claim Kabir as theirs by birth; and though the majority of his followers to-day are from among the Hindus, it seems probable that he was born a Mohammedan.[2] However this may be, he was brought up in a Moslem family and was influenced fully as much by Moslem as by Hindu ideas. He seems, moreover, from early youth to have realized that both Islam and Hinduism possessed much precious truth, but that each taken by itself was narrow and full of superstition, and it was the aim of his life to teach a kind of universal theism which should include all that was best in both the old religions and should be based neither on the Veda nor on the Koran, but rather on the immediate

[1] Howells, *The Soul of India*, p. 374.

[2] This at least is Westcott's opinion. See his *Kabir and the Kabir Panth* (Cawnpore, Christ Church Mission Press, 1907), pp. 32, and 44. Professor Wilson held the opposite view.

apprehension of the Divine. With such views as these he naturally found much in Indian society and the Indian religions both senseless and evil. One of the earliest authorities concerning him writes: —

"Kabir refused to acknowledge caste distinctions or to recognize the authority of the six schools of Hindu philosophy. . . . He held that religion without bhakti was no religion at all, and that asceticism, fasting, and almsgiving had no value if unaccompanied by worship. . . . He imparted religious instruction to Hindus and Mohammedans alike. He had no preference for either religion, but gave teaching that was appreciated by the followers of both. He spoke out his mind fearlessly and never made it his object merely to please his hearers." [1]

As Kabir's writings and sayings [2] still form the most important part of the scriptures of his followers, they are of interest not merely as ancient literature, but as living religious forces; hence it will not be out of place here to quote two or three as samples of what he taught four hundred years ago, and of what his followers are at least supposed to believe to-day. One of the chief topics of his instruction was the folly of caste, and of idolatry and externalism.

"I and you are of one blood, and one life animates us both; from one mother is the world born; what knowledge is this that makes us separate?" [3]

"There is nothing but water at the holy bathing places; I know that they are useless, for I have bathed in them.

"The images are all lifeless; they cannot speak; I know, for I have cried aloud to them.

"The Purana and the Koran are mere words; lifting up the curtain I have seen." [4]

"I laugh when I hear that the fish in the water is thirsty.

"You do not see that the Real is in your home, and you wander from forest to forest listlessly!

[1] Quoted by Westcott (p. 30) from Nabhaji, who wrote about 1700.

[2] Contained in the Bijak and the Granth, and in various *sakhis*, or couplets.

[3] From the *Bijàk*, quoted by Westcott, *op. cit.*, chap. III.

[4] *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, translated by Rabindranath Tagore (London, Macmillan, 1915), XLII.

"Here is the truth! Go where you will, to Benares or to Mathura; if you do not find your soul, the world is unreal to you." [1]

"So long as the sun does not rise the stars sparkle; so long as perfect knowledge of God is not obtained men practice ritualism." [2]

"The jogis, ascetics, austere devotees and sannyasis wander about at many places of pilgrimage; those with plucked-out hair, those with the *munj* cord, the silent ones, those who are wearing plaited hair, all are dying at the end. The Tantras are attended to by them but not Ram. On whose tongue is put the name of Ram, what can the God of Death do to him? The Shastras, Vedas, astrology, and many, many grammars they know; they know the Tantras, Mantras, and all medicines, yet at the end they must die. They enjoy dominion, an umbrella, and many beautiful women; betel, camphor, perfume and sandal, yet at the end they must die. All the Vedas, Puranas, and Smritis are searched by them, but in no wise are they spared. Kabir says, Utter the name of God; He extinguishes birth and death." [3]

"O Sadhu! the simple union is the best.

"I shut not my eyes, I close not my ears, I do not mortify my body;

"I see with eyes open and smile, and behold His beauty everywhere;

"I utter His Name, and whatever I see, it reminds me of Him; whatever I do it becomes His worship.

"Wherever I go, I move round Him,

"All I achieve is His service;

"When I lie down, I lie prostrate at His feet.

"Whether I rise or sit down, I can never forget Him; for the rhythm of His music beats in my ears." [4]

"More than all else do I cherish that love which makes me to live a limitless life in this world.

"It is like the lotus, which lives in the water and blooms in

[1] *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, XLIII.
[2] From the *Bijak*, quoted by Westcott.
[3] From the *Granth*, quoted by Westcott.
[4] Tagore's translation, XLI.

the water; yet the water cannot touch its petals, they open beyond its reach."[1]

Kabir was often persecuted by both Mohammedans and Hindus, yet he gathered a considerable following from both religions, and in the four hundred years since his death the Kabir Panthis, as his followers are called, have steadily increased, so that at the time of the 1901 census they numbered over 840,000.[2] Most of these are Hindus, though a few are Mohammedans — for Kabir never succeeded in winning his followers completely away from their old religions and blending them into a new one. The Hindu Kabir Panthis are also divided into two sects or orders, one of which has its headquarters at the Kabir Chaura in Benares, while that of the other is in the Central Provinces.[3] Both these orders have lay as well as clerical members, and each has its mahant or guru, who represents Kabir. There are branch monasteries in various parts of northern India, each having its own local mahant, and each being the religious center for the lay members of the region. "The mahant is supposed to visit his disciples at least once a year, to note the progress they have made, to give instruction to them and to their families, and to examine and receive into the order, if found qualified, such candidates as may be brought to him."[4] He must also report in person to the head mahant at headquarters once a year.

The Kabir Chaura Math — the Benares headquarters — is an interesting place, though not one that the tourist is likely to stumble upon if walking about the city — or running through his Murray. You must turn to the left from the main street, drive down a narrow and winding lane that becomes narrower and crookeder as you proceed till at last your carriage gets stuck between the two walls and can go no farther. You then get out and walk, diving into a still narrower lane between house and garden walls, and when you

[1] Tagore's translation, XXIV.

[2] According to Westcott (p. 2). Macnicol, in his recent book on *Indian Theism* (Oxford University Press, 1915), places the number at "from eight to nine thousand" (p. 136), but gives no authority for his statement. Possibly this is merely an *erratum* for eight to nine *hundred* thousand.

[3] In the Chattisgarh District. See Westcott, chap. V.

[4] Westcott, p. 118.

come to the proper gate, stoop and enter. The reader may think my directions indefinite, but I can do no better! At any rate, when you have passed through the little gate you find yourself in a large paved court, at the farther end of which is the room in which Kabir is supposed to have lived. It contains a famous painting of Kabir with three of his disciples, and also a pair of sandals intended to represent his feet, and the pillow on which he is supposed to have sat. Around the court are cells for the monks, and near its center is a raised platform, fenced off from the rest of the pavement, upon which stands what the visitor at first takes to be a little temple. It is not a temple, however; at least not a temple in the Hindu sense; for the Panth has been true to the teachings of its founder and has carefully shunned the many gods of Hinduism and their many idols. The building is *only* a "building" — erected to mark and protect the spot where Kabir is said to have sat when he taught his disciples or repeated with untiring devotion the name of God. No image is here, but only a cloth spread in the middle of the place, underneath the graceful dome, ever decked with fresh flowers.

There are at present about twenty monks in residence at this Math and in outward matters their life is rather similar to that of Hindu sannyasins. They rise early and bathe — though (as they were careful to tell me) not always in the Ganges; for Kabir disabused his disciples of any superstitious veneration for the sacredness of particular streams. After their bath they pray and meditate. At noon their one meal is brought to them. They do not go out and beg, for the lay members provide for their wants. Few of them — so far as I know, none of them — are learned; but they read from Kabir's writings — which is not difficult, as they are in the vernacular.

I asked them to whom they prayed, and they answered quite simply, "To Kabir." "But who is your God?" I asked; and again they answered quite naturally, "Kabir." "But to whom did Kabir pray?" To this question they replied that Kabir prayed to Ram, and that they pray to Kabir to pray to Ram for them.[1] Their assertion that Kabir was their God

[1] According to Westcott, prayer for the Kabir Panthis consists chiefly of meditation.

should probably not be given too much weight: the Indian guru always stands to some extent in God's place for the pious disciple. I do not doubt that these monks and their fellows are monotheists; yet it must be added that Kabir is coming perilously near to deification.

In fact the contents of the later religious writings of the Panth, as given by Westcott, show plainly that Kabir in the eyes of many of his followers has assumed a position quite comparable to that of Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. Two other changes in the religion of Kabir, introduced by recent generations and revealed in these books, are, first, an increase of Hindu conceptions — especially that of Maya or "Kal," with a corresponding tendency toward monism and away from the personal monotheism of the founder; and secondly, a greater emphasis on forms and externals. This latter tendency is, of course, the invariable accompaniment of a loss of inspiration; modifying Kabir's words quoted above we might say: When the sun sets the stars begin again to sparkle.

Hand in hand with these changes in belief has gone a similar change in the attitude of the Panth toward caste. Kabir's insistence that distinctions of birth are of no importance, that all men are brothers, is indeed still earnestly maintained — so far as the four higher castes are concerned. Shudras are accepted as readily as Brahmins, and in fact most of the members of the Panth are Shudras. In theory, moreover, the Panth retains its founder's democratic doctrine that *all* men are alike before God; but in practice men from the "outcaste" castes are not wanted as members.

At the weekly and monthly devotional services[1] a good deal of stress is laid upon form: many cocoanuts must be ceremoniously broken; many betel leaves, properly prepared with dew, must be consecrated and chewed; and that greatest of Indian religious delicacies, the water in which the feet of the guru have been washed, must be provided in abundance, mixed with earth and made up into pills to be swallowed by the faithful. Yet, in spite of this externalism, it is said that a real devotion is displayed, and every day the hymns of Kabir

[1] Held on Sundays and on the last day of the lunar month.

are devoutly sung. There is much in these meetings beside the form. And as to the form itself, on what ground are we justified in doubting the ability of piety and faith to turn even the betel leaf into the bread of life? It is but a symbol after all, and who are we to judge of others' symbols?

The ceremony of the initiation, like the Sunday service, has much of the external in it; but the ethical and genuinely religious teachings of Kabir are not forgotten. "All who desire to become members," writes Westcott, "are required to renounce polytheism and to acknowledge their belief in one only God. They must also promise to eat no meat and drink no wine; to bathe daily and sing hymns to God, both morning and evening; to forgive those who trespass against them up to three times; to avoid the company of all women of bad character and all unseemly jesting in connection with such subjects; never to turn away from their house their lawful wife; never to tell lies; never to conceal the property of another man; never to bear false witness against a neighbor or speak evil of another on hearsay evidence."[1]

Kabir's attempt to form a new religion from the best parts of Hinduism and Islam was not, it must be confessed, as successful and lasting in its results as he probably hoped it would be; but the attempt was certainly worth the making and has by no means completely failed. In fact so obvious was the need for some such amalgamation in Kabir's time that a contemporary of his, up in the Punjab, devoted his life to the same venture — and with results which have made much greater impression on India than the Kabir Panth has ever been able to produce. This man was Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion. He was born near Lahore about 1470, and like Kabir was subject from birth to both Hindu and Mohammedan influences, and early gave signs of the intense religious enthusiasm that was to be the propelling force of his whole life. During adolescence he went through the stage of spiritual upturnings which is so common with American and European youth; but in his case, instead of expressing itself in "conviction of sin" and conversion, it bodied itself forth in a vision of God, which seems to have been the beginning of his special

[1] Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

religious vocation. For he now resigned the position which he held, retired from the world, and together with his faithful friend Mardana, he went wandering about the land, meditating, discussing, teaching, composing hymns and singing them to the accompaniment of the musical instrument played by his friend. In the course of his travels he is said to have gone to Benares and to have come under the influence of Kabir. According to tradition this meeting was in Nanak's twenty-seventh year, and when Kabir was a very old man. The similarity of Nanak's point of view to Kabir's, and the fact that many of Kabir's hymns are given a place in the Granth, go far to bear out the tradition of the meeting of the two men and the influence of the older on the younger.

Nanak's whole life, from the beginning of his mission to his death, seems to have been that of a wandering ministrel, singing the songs of God in all willing ears, from the sacred city of the Hindus to the sacred city of the Moslems. For tradition has it that he made a pilgrimage to Mecca where, in characteristic fashion, he got into trouble with some of the fanatical pilgrims by protesting vigorously against their externalism and almost idolatrous slavery to form. During his long life of wandering he gathered about him many disciples from Mohammedans and from Hindus of all castes. Before his death he appointed Angad to be his successor in the office of guru. His followers were present in great numbers at the last to say farewell; and when the end came the dying guru uttered the Divine Name, "made obeisance to God, and blended his light with Guru Angad's. The guru remained the same. There was only a change of body produced by a supreme miracle."[1]

Nanak's teaching was, as I have said, very like that of Kabir. And the differences which exist are apparently to be attributed rather to differences in temperament than to any real divergence in belief. Both men were reformers and both were mystics; but in Kabir the mystic element seems to have been rather stronger than in Nanak, while the active spirit of protest and reform is more noticeable in Nanak than in Kabir.[2] Yet these differences are only slight. Like Kabir,

[1] Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, vol. I, p. 190.

[2] This difference comes out in the attitude of the two men toward vari-

Nanak proclaimed the unity of God with all the vigor of Mohammedanism. Yet the God of Nanak, like that of Kabir, is of the Indian rather than of the Semitic type. He lacks the anthropomorphism of Allah, and he has much of the immanence of Vishnu, or even of Brahman. Moreover, even the many gods of the Hindu pantheon are retained as subordinate spirits — good and bad — Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva being considered the first creations of the One God. In no way, however, does this acceptance of the Hindu devas as subordinate beings militate against the monotheism of Nanak, any more than the angels of Islam and Christianity make those religions polytheistic. Not Kabir or Mohammed is more outspoken in attack upon polytheism and idolatry than is the founder of the Sikh religion. Nor does the doctrine of incarnation, so dear to the Vaishnavite, fare any better at his hands. To externalism of all sorts, moreover, he was violently opposed. And in social reforms no less than religious he took an active part, opposing caste as Kabir had done, only with greater success.

The Sikh view of the future life Nanak took over direct from Hinduism with little change. Transmigration and Karma are accepted as a matter of course, and the final goal of man is reunion with God. God is often represented as light, and the soul of each of us as an emanation from It. Nirvana, or reabsorption into the Eternal Light, is the soul's aim and its great reward, — though for those less worthy a temporary heaven is provided. In Nirvana the soul blends its light with the Supreme Soul, meeting it "as water blends with water."

The way to salvation, Nanak taught, is an inner pathway. External forms and ascetic practices help not a whit. True devotion to God and meditation upon Him and selfless "work" done only out of love for God — these are the things that profit. In all this there is, of course, little new, little that was not taught long before Kabir's time in the Gita and by Ramanand — except that the protest against formalism had

ous Hindu customs. Kabir conformed to the traditional Indian diet, and in fact emphasized the guilt of meat-eating. Nanak, on the other hand, — owing perhaps in part to Mohammedan influences, — enjoined upon his followers a flesh diet.

never been so absolute and so outspoken in any of the bhakti schools. Another thing in which Nanak's way of salvation resembled that of the great Vaishnavite teachers was the emphasis which he put (as Kabir also had done) on the repetition of the Name of God. For fear, however, of inducing a relapse into the old forms of Hinduism, Nanak devised for this purpose a new divine appellation, namely, *Wahguru.*[1] The reverent and thoughtful repetition of this name he considered a great help in meditation, and he enjoined its practice upon his followers. Earnest meditation he regarded as the most important element in worship, and without it, he taught, no one could reach Nirvana or even heaven.

The teachings of Nanak — which are of course the teachings of the Sikh religion to-day — are, therefore, quite similar to those of the Hindu bhakti schools. They differ rather in what they deny than in what they affirm. Nanak not only opposed the doctrine of incarnation: he refused to accept any of the sacred books — either Hindu or Moslem — as authoritative; he opposed asceticism and professional begging, teaching his followers to earn their own living, to eat meat and live active lives; he would have nothing to do with caste distinctions and taught that all men were equal before God; and his constant endeavor was to make religion more simple, more inward, more spiritual.

Nanak discarded all authoritative books and relied upon direct intuition of religious truth; but he realized that not every one enjoyed such intuition to a degree sufficient for all the needs of the moral and religious life. The rank and file of his followers looked directly to him for guidance, and as guru of the new-founded community he took the place of all inspired books. So when he saw that his end was approaching, he named one of his disciples, as I have said, to be the inspired guru when he was gone. This man was Angad, and when *his* turn to depart into Nirvana arrived, in imitation of his Master he chose a successor with whom he "blended his light." In this manner the divine inspiration — or rather, as the Sikhs maintain, Nanak himself — was handed on, like the flame

[1] Concerning the meaning and derivation of which there is some controversy.

from which successive candles are lighted, through ten gurus. An inspired man, the early Sikhs believed, was much better than an inspired book; and all the gurus were really *one*.[1]

Of the nine gurus who followed Nanak, only two need here be mentioned, namely, Arjan and Gobind Singh. Arjan was the fifth guru (the fourth after Nanak) and is memorable for several things. He completed the great tank at Amritsar and began the erection of the Golden Temple — the center of Sikh worship — on an island in the middle of the tank. More important than this, the fifth guru was a mystic and a true poet, and not only did he add to the hymns written by Nanak and his three other predecessors, but he collected all these hymns, together with some by certain other saintly writers such as Kabir, and published them in a volume known as the "Granth Sahib" — or "Noble Book," "Holy Bible" — which is to-day the Bible and Prayer-Book of the Sikh religion. But Arjan was not only a poet and mystic: he had the stuff in him that martyrs are made of. When the Moghul Emperor Jahangir ordered him to erase certain parts of the Granth, he refused, replying firmly that he meant to maintain the integrity of the inspired volume; and adding: "If in pursuance of this object this perishable body must depart, I shall account it great good fortune."[2] The Emperor's reply was to put the guru to the torture. The guru died, but the Granth remained untouched.

But perhaps the act of the fifth guru most pregnant in consequences was his advice to his son and successor; namely, "to sit fully armed on his throne, and maintain an army to the best of his ability."[3] From this time on the Sikh community

[1] "Nanak assumed the body of Angad,
Afterwards *Nanak* was called Amar Das,
As one lamp is lit from another.

. . . . . .

The holy Nanak was revered as Angad,
Angad was recognized as Amar Das,
And Amar Das became Ram Das.
The pious saw this but not the fools,
Who thought them all distinct:
But some rare person recognized that they were one."

(From the Granth of the Tenth Guru. Translation by Macauliffe.)

[2] See Dorothy Field, *The Sikh Religion* (London, Murray, 1914), p. 19.

[3] *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

gradually transformed itself from a group of religious mystics into an army, and from a sect into a nation. The guru who contributed most to this transformation was Gobind Singh. He had been born and brought up in Patna (on the edge of Bengal) and was deeply imbued with Hindu influences. It is said that he was at one time a worshiper of Durga and even made a human sacrifice to her. He was, according to Monier Williams, "a curious compound of pugnacity, courage, superstition, and fanaticism."[1] It was he who completely made over the Sikhs into a nation of magnificent soldiers, who not only succeeded in defending their religion and their independence from the Mohammedan rulers in the eighteenth century, but were able in the nineteenth to carry on two severe wars with the British Empire, and later on to become its most trusty ally in the suppression of the Great Mutiny. Gobind Singh was not only a soldier and ruler, but something of a poet as well, and wrote a number of rather mechanically constructed hymns, which after his death were put together into "The Granth of the Tenth Guru" — the Granth compiled by Arjan being called, in distinction, the "Adi," or "Original" Granth. Both books are regarded with great reverence by the Sikhs, but the Adi Granth is naturally much the more important and authoritative of the two.

For the Granth has become authoritative. When Gobind Singh died he appointed no successor to the guruship except the Granth itself. "After me," he said, "you shall everywhere obey the Granth Sahib as your guru; whatever you shall ask, it will show you." Thus the Sikh religion was placed on exactly the sort of basis which its founder had intended it not to have, exchanging the inspiration of a living teacher for the legalism of a written book.

The Sikhs to-day number a little over three million,[1] most of whom live in the Punjab, though some are scattered over various parts of India and are found even as far away as Upper Burma. If one may trust the census, their numbers are increasing more rapidly than those of any other religion in India except Christianity and Buddhism — their rate of increase in the last ten years having been over ten per cent.

[1] *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 167. [2] To be exact, 3,014,466.

Some of this growth may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that during the last decade the more liberal Sikhs have readopted the democratic attitude toward caste that was characteristic of Nanak and most of his successors in the guruship. Gobind Singh in particular swelled the ranks of his army by baptizing into the Sikh fold large numbers of outcastes. Since his day, however, the Sikhs have nearly lost the old democratic spirit and have become almost Hindu in their feeling for caste. They recognize no castes within their body, but they will not intermarry with non-Sikhs — thus making their religious community itself a caste. During the last decade, however, as I have indicated, the more liberal of their number, spurred on by rivalry to the Arya Samaj which is so strong in the Sikh country, have begun again admitting low-caste Hindus into the fold. But another reason for the seeming increase of the Sikhs is to be found in the fact that each census unearths a large number of them who had in previous reports been set down as Hindus.[1] If this is at the bottom of their seemingly rapid rate of increase, the increase, of course, ceases to be significant. The fact, however, that so many Sikhs have been uncertain whether or not they were Hindus is significant.

The temples of the Sikhs do not differ so much from Hindu temples as one would be led to expect, considering the Protestantism of the founder. What the visitor sees of them and the worship within them is usually far from impressive. The approach to the Golden Temple at Amritsar, for instance, is lined with the usual display of Hindu beggars and ascetics, and all the surroundings of the place are unusually dirty even for India. And according to Professor Oman, the purlieus of the sacred tank are no cleaner morally than they are physically. The temple itself is certainly a beautiful building, and no

[1] The 1911 census seems to show an increase of thirty-seven per cent, but a large part of this is due to the fact that half a million Sikhs in 1901 were put down as Hindus, because of their noncomformity to the rules of Gobind Singh. This would bring the rate of increase down to something over ten per cent. It is quite likely that some even of this ten per cent is due to similar causes. See Oman's *Cults, Customs, and Superstitions of India* (2d ed., London, Unwin, 1908), p. 102, and especially the quotation from Macauliffe in the note.

expense of marble and gold leaf has been spared to make it impressive. Yet in spite of its magnificence, it is, from a religious point of view, somewhat disappointing. The central hall has, of course, been influenced by the Hindu temple, the chief difference being that in place of Krishna's image or Shiva's lingam you find an enormous copy of the Granth Sahib, lying on an ottoman and covered over with a cloth. It is uncovered (so at least I was told by one of the temple priests) at 5 A.M. and 11 P.M., when the priests read from it (intoning), and hymns are sung — sometimes by a choir. During the rest of the day the Granth Sahib simply sits on its ottoman, properly veiled, receiving the reverence of visitors. Perhaps half a dozen priests were sitting behind it when we entered the temple, most of them engaged in conversation with each other, while two of them lazily waved long brushes of peacock's feathers and occasionally swept up with them the yellow marigold blossoms that were constantly being strewn around the Granth Sahib by pious worshipers.

The worship of the Sikhs takes many forms. Perhaps the most important part of it is the daily repetition of the Japji — the longest of the hymns of Guru Nanak. "The Japji," writes Macauliffe, "is considered by the Sikhs a key to their sacred volume and an epitome of its doctrines. It is silently repeated by the Sikhs early in the morning. Every Sikh must have it by heart, otherwise he is not deemed orthodox. It is the duty of all Sikhs, even if they cannot read, to have themselves taught this great morning divine service." [1] The Japji is a hymn of praise to the Supreme and contains many noble thoughts and some true poetry. It is far too long to quote here entire, but a few of its verses will give an idea of the whole: —

"Who can sing His attributes, His greatness, His deeds?
Who can sing Him who fashioneth the body and again destroyeth it?
Who can sing Him who appeareth to be far, but is known to be near?
Who can sing Him who is all seeing and omnipresent?
Praisers praise God, but have not acquired a knowledge of Him,
As rivers and streams fall into the sea but know not its extent.
Kings and emperors who possess oceans and mountains of property and wealth
Are not equal to the worm which forgetteth not God in his heart." [2]

[1] Oman, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 195. [2] Macauliffe's translation, *op. cit.*

Beside the repetition of the Japji and the morning service of intoning the Granth in the temple, the Sikhs have various other forms of worship. Some visit the temple at any time of day and there engage in individual devotion, intoning the hymns of Nanak before the Granth. More often their worship consists of circumambulating the shrine five or more times. But the commonest form of worship, if one may judge by what he sees in Sikh temples, consists in making offerings of flowers to the Granth Sahib, the flowers (usually marigolds) being sprinkled on the book or before it. This is true not only of the Sikhs in Amritsar, but in various parts of India. In the Sikh temple at Benares, in the shrine close to Ranjit Singh's tomb at Lahore, in the very sacred temple that marks the spot of Gobind Singh's birth at Patna, I have seen the same idolatrous reverence for the Granth Sahib as at Amritsar. Farquhar writes that in Conjeeveram he has been shown an altar on which fire sacrifice is regularly performed to the Granth. In his Satyarth Prakash, Swami Dayanand, the founder of the Arya Samaj, writes of the Sikhs: "Though they perform no idol-worship, yet they worship their Granth more idolatrously. Is it not idolatry? Idolatry is bowing to or worshiping any material object. They have done exactly the same as the idolaters, who have made idolatry a very lucrative business. Just as the idolaters exhibit their idols to the people at large and receive presents for their gods; so do the followers of the religion of Nanak worship the Granth, allow it to be worshiped, and receive presents for it." [1]

This sad development of the Sikh religion might very well give us Christians food for thought. Just as Hindu temple worship should be a useful warning to every Catholic, so the bibliolatry of the Sikhs should act as an object lesson to every Protestant. Nanak's reform, like Luther's, was away from external authority to living experience. Nanak's successors have almost defeated his spiritual purpose by making the Granth into an idol. And have not some of Luther's successors come perilously near to turning the Bible into a fetish? If one would see the logical conclusion of slavery to the letter, let him go to Amritsar and visit the Golden Temple.

[1] English translation, p. 363.

Not only in their attitude toward the Granth, but in other matters has there been a decided falling-off among the Sikhs from the purity of Nanak's teaching. The reverence which he taught his disciples to cherish for their guru has degenerated into guru worship. When I asked one of the Sikhs in the temple at Patna whom he worshiped, he answered quite naïvely, "Gobind Singh." A tablet attached to the gateway of the Golden Temple speaks of Guru Ram Das as an incarnation of Ram. Evidences of a relapse into Hinduism are to be found in most parts of the Sikh world. In fact one can hardly call it a relapse, for — owing largely to the early enmity of the Mohammedans — the Sikhs have always formed, in one sense, merely a branch of Hinduism. I therefore should not have been surprised (though I confess I was) to find the tomb of Guru Arjan at Lahore adorned with pictures from Hindu mythology, and to see a Ganesh over the entrance of the tomb of Ranjit Singh, next door. The sacred tank at Amritsar has long been lined with signs of encroaching Hinduism. When Monier Williams visited it, nearly fifty years ago, an intelligent Sikh whom he met there pointed to an idol of Krishna on the edge of the lake and said, "We Sikhs are gradually lapsing back into our old habits. Our first guru abolished caste and forbade the worship of idols. Out tenth guru was a thorough Hindu at heart and by his own example encouraged the return of Hindu practices; so that of the Sikhs now found in the Punjab a large number adopt caste, wear the Brahmanical thread, keep Hindu festivals, observe Hindu ceremonies such as the shraddha, and even present offerings to idols in Hindu temples." [1]

There have been for years two parties among the Sikhs, one of them nourishing the spirit of reform and protestantism, the other favoring the retention of all the Hindu forms and usages that have crept into their religion. But the rank and file of the Sikhs, I imagine, belong to neither of these parties, — at least not consciously, — but find the questions of their relation to Hinduism — and most other theoretical questions — rather vague and decidedly uninteresting. A Sikh whom I found away up in Mandalay — and who seemed to be an unusually

[1] *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, p. 178.

intelligent and fervent believer — told me he had never heard of any of his co-religionists worshiping Ganesh or any Hindu god, or anything but the Granth Sahib. For his own part, at any rate, he knew that he worshiped the Granth Sahib and nothing else. I asked him if he worshiped God, and he said, "Yes." Then I said, "Have you *two* Gods, namely God and the Granth?" — to which he answered, "No." "We worship God *through* the Granth," he explained. "And when we worship the Granth it is not the paper and ink that we worship, but the words and ideas, which are those of God." All good Sikhs, he said, were supposed to read the Granth every day, and to go to the temple and hear it read there on Sundays. He showed me his own little well-thumbed copy of the Japji — for he had no copy of the whole Granth. This, he said, he used in prayer. All his prayers consist of recitation or reading from some passage of the Granth, and this, he said, was true of most Sikhs. They make no spontaneous prayers or petitions of their own, but find in the Granth suitable prayers for anything that they need. About the next world he seemed to know — and think — very little. He had a confused idea that if he were good he would go after death to heaven for a great many lakhs of years, and then start again on the wheel of birth beginning with animal forms; but he seemed quite uncertain about it, and apparently the hope played a very small part in his life.

The Sikhs as a class seem to be a manly lot, and they certainly make fine soldiers. They do not, however, seem to be particularly noted for intelligence or education. And in religious education they seem to be not much better off than the average. Parents teach their children the Japji, but how much of it they understand is a question. Nanak wrote his hymns in the vernacular, but the vernacular of four hundred years ago is not the vernacular of to-day; hence the meaning of the Granth, in its ancient Punjabi, is rather blind to most or its readers — or reciters. And of course the great majority of the Sikhs cannot read even the language which they speak. Moreover, out of consideration for the weakness of the flesh and the necessities of business, the leaders allow their followers to do their Granth reading by proxy.[1]

[1] According to Oman: *Cults, Customs, and Superstitions of India*, p. 93.

The Sikhs of to-day, however, are waking up, with the rest of India, to the need of reform and of education. A growing self-consciousness has tended to prevent further encroachments of Hinduism. The idols which had found their way into the Golden Temple were thrown out in 1905. And perhaps more important, a movement has been set on foot for real education, and the community is now supporting forty-six schools for boys, thirty-three for girls, and a college — not to mention a "Sikh Educational Conference" which meets annually to discuss educational questions and raise funds. In matters pertaining more strictly to religious education and propaganda, new efforts are also being made. A Tract Society, a "Young Men's Sikh Association" and a "Khalsa [1] Young Men's Association" have been founded, and twenty or thirty evangelists and missionaries have been set to work, preaching the gospel of Nanak to Sikhs and non-Sikhs.[2]

In spite of these incipient reforms it is evident that the original inspiration of Nanak and the early gurus has been largely spent. Whether it can ever be rekindled so as to be again a really significant spiritual power seems rather questionable. The same thing may be said with equal truth of the movement started by Kabir. And yet the inspiration and insight for which Kabir and Nanak stood has not been lost. The followers of these seers, dwelling in the darker valleys, may at times have forgotten the light; but the light itself, like the fiery message in the "Agamemnon," has been handed on from headland to headland, and is the living truth for India to-day as it was when the ancient Rishis penned the first Upanishads.

[1] "Khalsa" is a name for the Sikh community.

[2] These facts concerning the reform movement are drawn from Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements in India*, pp. 341–43.

CHAPTER XIII

THE JAINAS

THE various reform movements of modern India are not the only ones to which Hinduism has given birth. India has always been a land of thought (as well as of tradition), and from times that antedate history, little bands of relatively independent thinkers have arisen within the fold of Hinduism, giving expression sometimes to reforming protests, sometimes to new philosophies. The overwhelming majority of these children of Hinduism have quickly or slowly sunk back into the capacious arms of their ever-patient mother and lost all independence in her strong embrace. A very few have retained their individuality and become separate religions. By far the greatest of these is, of course, Buddhism. But Buddhism is not the oldest. The title to this position of oldest non-Hindu, native Indian religion belongs to the faith of a small group of monks and laymen, numbering now but a million and a quarter, and known as the Jainas.

The man who put this religion into something like its present shape was a contemporary of Buddha, but rather older than he; and if we may believe the Jaina of tradition (as scholars are beginning to do), he was not actually the originator of the sect which follows his teachings; he merely handed on with certain modifications a line of thought and practice which was already old in his day. This man is known by several names, but the commonest of them is Mahavira, which means "Great Hero." He is also called the Jina or the "Conqueror," because he learned how to master himself and conquer Fate, and taught men how to do the same. It is from this epithet of his that his religion takes its name; for the "Jainas" are the "Conquerors." Mahavira is said to have been born about 600 B.C. and to have died about 527. Like his younger contemporary, Buddha, he spent his life teaching the truths which he had in part received, in part discovered, and at his death he left behind him an organized body of monks and also many lay followers.

The most important event in the history of Jainism subsequent to the death of Mahavira was the great schism that took place about 300 B.C.[1] as a result of which the Jainas have been divided, up to this day, into two separate bodies which have but little to do with each other. The division took place over the question of the more or less rigorous maintenance of the ancient rules of the order. To us, to-day, the particular points at issue seem trivial; but they were serious matters in 300 B.C. The chief controversy was over the costume of the monk. Mahavira had taught that the monk should eschew all clothing — for nakedness has always been regarded in India as a sign of peculiar sanctity. At the time of the schism one party had so far yielded to the conventions of the times as to adopt clothing, and called themselves the "Svetambaras," or "those clad in white." The more conservative section would have no fellowship with those who yielded thus shamelessly to the weakness of the flesh, and broke off relations with them, being known by the picturesque title "Digambara," or "clad in the sky"; for they retained the sky as their only garment. A third great sect, the Sthanakavasi, established itself about five hundred years ago, branching off from the Svetambaras as a protest against the use of images. Each of these three sects has its own canon of sacred scriptures, that of the Svetambaras being the oldest, and dating in its present form from about 450 A.D., though based on books that probably were in existence at the time of the great schism. The Digambaras reject the Svetambara canon and have one of their own — which in fact is based on the Svetambara version; while the Sthanakavasi canon is merely a selection from the Svetambara books. Each of these three great sects, in proper protestant fashion, has subdivided and blossomed in various ways;[2] so that at present there are nearly ninety subdivisions of Jainism. Fortunately there is beginning to-day a tendency in the opposite direction

[1] The real division seems to have come at this time, though the two sects were not officially and explicitly divided until the first or second century A.D.

[2] That this process began fairly early and continued through centuries is shown by the numerous lists of Teachers and subdivisions in the Jaina inscriptions. See Guérinot, *Répertoire d'Épigraphie Jaina* (Paris, Leroux; 1908), esp. pp. 35–68.

and a real desire for unity among the Jainas — as we shall see later on in this chapter. The tendency is only a beginning, but it is hopeful because the differences between the various sects and sub-sects are minute and purely external, while on the great fundamentals of their religion they are in perfect accord.

These fundamentals go back to the teachings of Mahavira and arise out of the great problem of his times and the great problem of all times: *What must I do to be saved?* As we know from Buddhist sources, the age of Gautama and Mahavira was one in which this problem of the liberation of the soul was taken very seriously. Buddha enumerates some sixty-two answers proposed by various sects and teachers to the great question. Popular Indian religion taught that the performance of various rites to some God was the road to salvation. Philosophical Brahmanism taught that it could be won only through recognition of the identity of the soul with Brahman. Buddha had his solution. And Mahavira had his. Now, the problem of salvation is complex.[1] It involves one's conception of the whole world, of the soul, its nature and ideal, and of the relation of the soul to the world and to that part of it which in a special way it inhabits — namely, the body. The Jaina solution of this complex problem is characteristically Indian, yet quite unique. It rejects Brahman, and, in one sense, all the gods, accepts the material world and the individual soul as equally real, adopts Karma, and by one stroke seeks to explain both the relation of soul and body, the ideal to be attained, the obstacles in the way, and the means of reaching the goal. *This it does by identifying Karma with body.* Why has the soul a body, and how is this built up? The Jaina answers: It is because by yielding to impulses and attractions one draws around one's true self subtle particles of real physical matter which one takes with him to the next birth as his Karma, and which determine his characteristics and his fate in the next life. It is from this wretched body of ours — both gross and subtle — that all our ills, our sins and sorrows and stupidities

[1] Hence all of the "Three Jewels" of Jainism are requisite — namely, "Right Knowledge, Right Faith, Right Conduct." Cf. the "Triple Gem" of the Buddhists.

arise. And the aim of all life is to strip off layer after layer of these clinging fetters, until at length the soul is free, —

"Leaving its outgrown shell by Life's unresting sea."

The view is summarized as follows by a recent English convert to Jainism, Mr. Herbert Warren: —

"We and all other living beings on this earth are from one point of view uncreate, self-existent, immortal, individual souls, alive with feeling and consciousness, and never to lose our own identity. We are each of us responsible to others for our conduct toward them. We are responsible to ourselves for our own condition. In whatever degree we are ignorant, in pain, unhappy, unkind, cruel, or weak, it is because since birth, and even previously in the infinite past, we are and have been acquiring and incorporating into ourselves — by the attraction and assimilation of subtle, unseen, though real physical matter — energies [Karma] which clog the natural wisdom, knowledge, blissfulness, love, compassion, and strength of the soul, and which excite us to unnatural action. Until we leave off this unnatural kind of life, by refusing to obey impulses and promptings which by our own conscience and understanding we believe to be wrong, and which are only the blind automatic operation of those unnatural though sometimes powerful energies in us [Karma], the peace of mind which is inseparable from a life of rectitude, and the final pure natural state of existence in everlasting blissfulness [Moksha] must remain nothing more than matters of faith and hearsay." [1]

To this summary I need add but a few details. According to the Jaina system, the universe is unending and uncreate. There is no God, but only eternal souls and the eternal elements. The universe is made up of the two grand divisions of jivas, or living things, and ajivas, or non-living things. These latter are five in number, namely: (1) Motion; (2) Inertia; (3) Space; (4) Time; and (5) Sensuous Qualities, or a mysterious substance possessing them.[2] The reader will probably note

[1] *Jainism* (Madras, Minerva Press, 1912), pp. 4–5.

[2] It is difficult to know exactly what the Jainas include under this fifth class. Their technical word for it is *Pudgalastikaya*, which Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson translates "matter which possesses colour, smell, taste and form, and is perceptible to touch." (*The Heart of Jainism* [Oxford Uni-

with some surprise that ordinary matter is not in this list. It is odd to find that the Jainas, who in their explanation of the soul's Karma are so naïvely materialistic, when they come to deal directly with what we know as matter may almost be called panpsychists. For matter, or at any rate a great deal of it, is for them the lowest form of life, and is at least potentially conscious. Mahavira thus by many a century anticipates Leibnitz. Stones and lumps of earth, water — yes, even such things as wind and atoms — are for the Jainas living beings,[1] — jivas — and as such members of the great line of evolution which leads up through plants, animals, and men to the liberated spirits who have perfect knowledge, being no longer closed grossly in by the muddy vesture of our clay. To rise in the scale and become freed from body and its woes is or should be the aim of all. But this is difficult, because subtle matter pours into our souls through forty-two different channels (seventeen major and twenty-five minor) and thus forms the eight different kinds of Karma which we carry with us into the next life. (The writers of the Jaina sacred books are very systematic thinkers and particularly "strong" on arithmetic. They know just how many different kinds of different things there are in the universe and they have them all tabulated and numbered, so that they shall have a place for everything and everything in its place.)[2] These forty-two

versity Press, 1915], p. 108.) But it evidently is not "matter" in our sense of the word, since "things belonging to this earth, such as stones, lumps of clay, salts, chalk, diamonds, and other minerals," and also "water, rain, dew, fog, melted snow, melted hail, fire, a magnet, electricity, a meteor, flintstone sparks," as well as air and "all sorts of wind," all are classed under one of the five kinds of jiva, or living things. It would therefore seem that Pudgalastikaya can hardly mean matter, and it is perhaps best to translate it by the ambiguous phrase, "substance possessing sensuous qualities." These sensuous qualities, it will be noted, are regarded as existing objectively — a rather odd view for a panpsychist.

[1] The attempt to take a realistic view of matter and to explain various characteristics of the soul by means of it, and at the same time to explain matter as being in itself composed of jivas, or souls, indicates a confusion of thought. If matter is really soul, then how are the soul's qualities and its fate to be explained by means of matter?

[2] Thus jiva may be classified in thirteen different ways; there are five kinds of ajiva, nine kinds of merit, and forty-two fruits of merit; there are eighteen kinds of sin, eighty-two results of sin, and eight kinds of Karma; the channels by which Karma enters, as has been said, number seventeen

"Asravas," inflowings, as they are called, are various passions, particularly anger in all its possible shades of strength, together with pride, illusion, lack of self-control, etc.; in short, be it noted, they all belong to the moral category.

It is these forty-two classes that determine our Karma. Together with all other religions native to India, the Jainas lay great stress on Karma as the one satisfactory and complete solution of the problem of the ills of life. In fact, they carry it into even greater detail than do the Hindus, for the elaborate systematization found in their sacred books enables them not only to say in a general way that So-and-So must have been a sinner in a previous existence, but in certain cases to analyze his symptoms so as to determine exactly the nature of his former sins. Thus, Mrs. Sinclair Stevenson writes of a Jaina gentleman who told her "that as his family consisted only of daughters, he found it a great expense to marry them all off, but he dared not complain, as all his friends assured him it was only his just punishment for having misappropriated funds in a previous existence." [1] A sad example of this belief in Karma is the Jaina doctrine that if a child-wife loses her husband it is as a punishment for having been unfaithful to a husband in a previous existence. Surely the little widow is not greatly comforted by believing in her own guilt, nor is her lot made the more bearable by those around her because of their certainty that through her sins she was responsible for her husband's premature death.

Rebirth in another human body is not the only possible fate provided by Jaina philosophy. A wicked man may in his next incarnation be born an animal or even a vegetable. And this for the Jaina is no joke. In spite of the Indian's consideration for animal life, there would be little pleasure in being born a dog in India, and (as Mrs. Stevenson suggests) consider the humiliation of being a potato, or perhaps an onion! But worse than that is the fate of being born in one of the hells — and there are seven of them. And though punishment in hell is

major and twenty-five minor; Karma may be impeded in just fifty-seven ways and destroyed by six austerities; there are four kinds of bondage to Karma; and fifteen kinds of beings inhabit Moksha.

[1] *Notes on Modern Jainism* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1910), p. 78.

not eternal, the wicked go there for long-term sentences and emerge from them, as a rule, only through the lower forms of vegetable and animal life.

But if there are seven hells, there are twenty-six heavens. The lower are not altogether void of pain and imperfection; but joy predominates, and there is a steady progress from one to the other (with occasional rebirths as ascetics) until one reaches Moksha, where every perfection dwells. Here finally one becomes free from body and free from all the eight kinds of Karma. Endless bliss is here, as distinct from pleasure, for here at length one becomes pure Soul.

The Jaina books describe minutely the process of spiritual evolution that leads the natural man on and up until at last he attains to Moksha. In proper systematic fashion, moreover, this process is divided into exactly fourteen stages. The description of it forms thus a kind of psychology of conversion. It is not possible, however, for all human beings to advance indefinitely upon this path to liberation in the present life. Although in theory the Jaina religion is open to all, the best course for the low-caste aspirant for Moksha is to die and be reborn in a higher caste; for there is no place for him, in his present vile state, within a Jaina temple. For the Jainas keep caste (though not so rigidly as the Hindus), and in fact are divided by caste lines among themselves. And not only the Pariah, but even high-caste women also, — including the nuns themselves, — find it hard to rise very high on the Jaina ladder to salvation. According to the Digambaras no woman can reach higher than the eighth step of the ladder; while the Svetambaras and Sthanakavasis insist that, though some women may attain to the highest stage, only twenty women actually do so for every one hundred and eight men. Even for men who have not turned monks the prospect of Moksha is not bright. And as a matter of fact the discussion of all these possibilities turns out to be rather academic, since we are informed that no one can enter into Moksha for the next 18,548 years anyhow. The last man who entered into Moksha died three years after Mahavira; and no one else is to be admitted during the rest of this cycle — which is to last until the year A.D. 20,463. Hence it behooves the pious Jaina to cultivate the virtue of patience.

Patience, however, is a virtue not uncommon in India, and the Jaina is not so foolish as to "try to hustle the East," and still less the East's Providence. There are many good things this side of Moksha; and I am not sure but they attract the lay brother quite as much as the rather dull state of Moksha, which, as we shall see, appears to be characterized chiefly by indifference to everything.

But the state of Moksha remains, at least in theory, the bright ideal of Jainism; and the twenty-four *Tirthankaras*, together with many lesser lights, have entered into it. The Tirthankaras are regarded by the Jainas as at once the founders or revealers and the ideals of their religion. The last of them was Mahavira, the historical preacher. But, as I said at the beginning of this chapter, it is probable that Mahavira had predecessors; and the Jainas have given him twenty-three of them, each with a name and date of his own. They are known as Tirthankaras, or "ford-finders," because it was they who discovered a way through the wild waters of this world into the realm of the ideal. They are accepted by the Jainas (and Mrs. Besant) as historical characters; in fact, Mrs. Besant assures the Jainas that the only reason European scholars doubt the historicity of any of these ancient gentlemen is because young Europe is jealous of the antiquity of Asia. Antiquity they certainly have, if we may believe the Jainas. The first of them, "Lord Adinath" or "Rishabhadeva," appeared 100,000,000,000,000 *palya* ago. Now, a palya is the length of time it would take to empty a well a mile square stuffed full of fine hairs, if one hair were pulled out every century.[1]

But the Tirthankaras are of importance to the Jainism of to-day not chiefly in their capacity of historical or mythical founders and revealers, but as ideals set for the emulation of their followers. They are supposed to have attained to Moksha, or something very like it, in this life; for Moksha, or heaven, to the Jaina is not so much a place as a state of mind. It is a place, too, no doubt — the highest point in the universe, to

[1] Incidentally, let me add, Lord Adinath seems to have been sadly attached to this wicked world, for he had to live 8,400,000 years before he succeeded in attaining to Moksha.

which the soul floats up (by the laws of gravity) [1] after having got rid of all matter. This is the rather naïve and realistic side of their doctrine. But the emphasis is laid upon the spiritual rather than upon the materialistic side, and the characteristics of Moksha most commonly thought of are its psychical ones. It is these that are of interest to us as having influence over the life of the Jainas and coloring their ideals. One of my Jaina friends described the Tirthankaras in Moksha as being immortal and dwelling in perfect freedom forevermore. They have won eternal peace — they are the "Conquerors" — and have no more to fear. This means, he said, that they are without need, without care, without desire, without relation to the changing. Though conceived as having infinite power, they never use it, for they want nothing. When asked as to the nature of their consciousness, my friend could not tell me. Certainly they are conscious, he said; but apparently they are not thinking of anything. They are free from the particular. Their consciousness is a state of peace raised to the highest degree. And they are, of course, out of all relation to us and quite uninfluenced by anything that we can do or say.[2] To this description the books in their systematic fashion add certain other marks. The Tirthankaras — or any one else who has attained to Moksha — has exactly eighteen characteristics, most of which, on examination, prove to be of a negative sort. Anger, lust, greed, ignorance, sleepiness, desire are gone. Gone also are all sorrow, pleasure, and sense of humor; for (as the Jainas explain) the sense of humor being due to some unfamiliar connection of ideas, it is impossible to one who has attained complete knowledge. But the chief characteristic of Moksha is the *absence of attachment*, the killing-out of desire, which forms so important a part of the Buddhist Nirvana. In Moksha one attains complete *indifference* to all that happens; and thus becomes independent and free. It is related of Mahavira that, even in this

[1] Dante seems to have had a conception of the ascent of the soul, upward from the earth, in some ways similar to the Jaina view. See the *Paradiso*, canto I.

[2] According to Mrs. Stevenson it is the Tirthankara in his capacity of man rather than as a *siddha*, or inhabitant of Moksha, that is worshiped. This, however, is a rather fine distinction, and it is doubtful whether many of the Jainas know anything about it.

life, "he was indifferent alike to the smell of ordure and of sandalwood, to straw and to jewels, dirt and gold, pleasure and pain, attached neither to this world nor to that beyond, desiring neither life nor death." [1]

In strict theory, as I have said, the Tirthankaras are merely ideals for the emulation of the brethren. They are far from being gods; yet they are the nearest approach to gods that the orthodox Jaina possesses, and they are commonly referred to as divine. In this respect Jainism recalls forcibly Comte's "Religion of Humanity." Both systems are emphatically atheistic, yet both feel the need of some semi-divine ideal as a help to the weakness of our flesh. And both seek to turn their philosophy into religion by setting up for our admiration and our worship a group of human beings who are conceived as having gone through what we are experiencing, and as having conquered and become all that we hope to be. The system of Mahavira, however, has an advantage over that of Comte in choosing for its ideals certain almost unknown or quite mythical personages, who therefore can be endowed by the imagination with every virtue; and the further and greater advantage that its conquerors are conceived as having conquered death as well as sin, and as dwelling in the glorious light of an eternal and self-conscious life; whereas Comte's ideals are ideals only, themselves dead and gone long ago, and existing now only in the memories of us frail creatures of a day, who are so soon to follow them into the thoughtless abyss of an endless night, in which shall perish also all influence and trace of vice or virtue.

The Tirthankaras, then, are the ideals and Moksha the goal of Jainism; and the attainment of this goal is what it means by salvation. We can, therefore, now come nearer to the great question: *What must I do to be saved?* What, in other words, are the means laid down by Jainism for the checking of Karma and the purifying of the soul?

The most elementary and fundamental of these means are the five great vows or rules of conduct, and the seven supplementary ones, which every layman is supposed to observe.

[1] Kalpa Sutra, 119. (Jacobi's translation, S.B.E. Vol. x, American ed. New York, Scribners, 1901.)

The first of these is the famous "ahimsa" vow against the taking of life.[1] With the monk this is an exceedingly serious matter — as the reader will see if he recalls how far life is supposed, by Jaina philosophy, to extend. But to the layman the vow is somewhat softened down by the exclusion from it of jivas with only one sense; that is, what we should call non-organic things, such as earth, water, and air, and also most vegetables and fruits. These the Jaina layman may slay and eat. Even with this limitation, however, the vow has certain very far-reaching effects. For one thing it makes all Jainas vegetarians. There are, moreover, certain kinds of vegetables, such as carrots, potatoes, turnips, — in short, all that grow underground, — which are conceived of as not merely being alive but as having many lives in one body; and these the good Jaina must not eat.[2] In spite of these restrictions, however, the diet of the Jaina can have considerable variety, and with good cooking can be very tasty. I had lunch at the Svetambara rest-house and school in Benares and can testify to the pleasant flavor of the twenty-one different kinds of food that were served. Eating by lamp light is forbidden, since the lamps may kill many insects. Even certain kinds of occupation are precluded by this rule of ahimsa, including agriculture and most manufacturing. For ploughing may destroy much animal and vegetable life (not to mention the clods of earth which include innumerable living things); and manufacture usually involves fire or some other danger to insects. Hence, most of the Jainas are dealers in jewels, money-lenders, or lawyers, or have some equally innocent profession. They may also

[1] Cf. the vows of the Hindu monk, p. 155 of this book.

[2] The rule against the eating of these vegetables is being modified by some of the more liberal Jainas, as will be seen from the following extract from the *Jaina Gazette* for November, 1914. The students of a Jaina boarding-school in Allahabad, it seems, recently formed an association whose excellent work is reported in the article referred to, which then continues: "That its work has been appreciated by those who have come in contact with it may in some measure be inferred from the valuable assistance given us by the secretary of the Jaina boarding-house, by considering our requests and making arrangements that they should be granted. Modification in the rules of the Jaina boarding-house in the matter of food-restriction is due to this fact and the students are not prohibited now from eating potatoes. The association is very grateful to him."

be landowners, so long as they do not themselves cultivate their land, but let it out to the wicked for that purpose.

A more pleasing, though hardly less bizarre, result of the law of ahimsa is the establishment by the Jainas of numerous animal asylums and hospitals. Sickly and crippled cows, dogs, horses, etc., are gathered and cared for by these oddly tender-hearted people. The animal asylum in Ahmedabad — a kind of Old Animals' Home — contains about eight hundred four-footed lodgers, besides many winged guests; and no one knows how many hungry insects, to whom, in fact, one entire room is devoted. One also occasionally sees a Jaina (or a Hindu) going along the roadside and sprinkling food near ant-hills for the nourishment of the little inhabitants. Doubtless in their solicitude for animal life the Jainas are often absurd. Yet the accusation of being too kind to animals is not altogether dishonorable. And in India, as well as in many Christian countries, there is crying need of more sympathy with our four-footed brothers. To the honor of the Jainas be it said one cannot read far in modern Jaina publications without coming upon appeal after appeal for greater kindness to the dumb and suffering brutes. For the vow not to kill is not merely negative. "The man who takes this vow must avoid five faults in the treatment of animals: he must never tie an animal up too tightly; beat it unmercifully; cut its limbs; overload or overwork it; or neglect to feed it properly." [1]

The second vow is against lying, dishonesty, and exaggeration. The third is against stealing. "In especial, a man is warned never to buy stolen property, never to encourage another in thieving, never to act seditiously, to smuggle or to work in any way against the Government; nor to use false weights or measures, to adulterate goods or to sell them false to sample." [2] It is said that some of the Jaina merchants adopt a liberal interpretation of the second and third vows. The fourth rule is against adultery or incontinence. The Jainas regard all sexual relations as obstacles in the progress of the soul, since they tend to increase the influx of Karma. Hence, for one who is really in earnest about his salvation the celibate life is best. Yet marriage is not wrong — if conjugal fidelity

[1] Mrs. Stevenson, *The Heart of Jainism*, p. 206. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

and a fair amount of continence be observed; and in fact the Svetambaras even permit a man to have two wives if it is clear that the first wife can bear no children. The fifth vow is intended to prevent covetousness or inordinate desire for possessions by inducing the individual to set an arbitrary limit on the amount of worldly goods which he will ever acquire. It reads thus: "I take a vow not to possess more of the following things than I have allowed myself: a certain fixed quantity of houses and fields, of silver and gold, of coins and grain, of two-footed or four-footed creatures, furniture and plenishing. Beyond this limit I will regard nothing as my own possession." [1]

Of the seven remaining vows one enforces hospitality toward Jaina monks, while the six others are concerned with the training of the mind. Some of these are vows which one occasionally takes to perform certain acts of slight asceticism, such as limiting, either for a short period or for life, the number of places one will visit, the number of things one will use, the different foods that he will eat, etc. One vows, for instance, that for a month he will not touch his favorite food; or in the morning he pledges himself to sit down on no more than a certain number of seats that day. This sort of thing to us Westerners seems absurd; and with what judgment we judge we are judged. It seems absurd to us partly because we fail to realize that self-control is a habit which must be cultivated if it is to be attained, and that slightly ascetic tasks are to the moral athlete what dumb-bells and chest-weights are to the gymnast; and largely because the highest form of self-control — the complete dominance of the flesh by the spirit — does not appeal to us as particularly desirable.

In addition to these twelve vows, the Jaina books detail some fifty-seven different ways in which Karma may be impeded and the soul gradually freed. In general, however, they cover much the same ground as the twelve vows, and we need not go into them here. Most of them have to do with slightly ascetic practices, — mind training, inhibition of evil or weakening thoughts, and the direction of the mind in proper channels through contemplation of suitable subjects.

[1] Mrs. Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

The reader must bear in mind that in Jainism, on the one hand, and in Christianity, Judaism, and Mohammedanism on the other, morality stands on quite different bases. For the three latter the moral laws are divine commands. For Jainism they are merely means which the wise man will take if he really wishes to attain his goal. There is no Categorical Imperative for the Jaina. It lies entirely with him whether he will make use of these means or not. He has a perfect right, if he so wishes, to assimilate Karma and be born a potato.[1]

All of these means are *recommended* for the layman and laywoman, but are *indispensable* for the monks and nuns if they are to take their profession seriously. The whole of the monastic life is so arranged as to break all worldly ties and make one feel that here we have no continuing city and that Moksha is our home. The original rule of the Jaina orders (considerably modified to-day) permitted them to stay but a week in a village and a month in a town — except during the rainy season, when, indeed, they were, and are, charged to remain for the entire four months in one place. The purpose of this is not the protection of the monks or nuns from the downpour and the heat; it is for the protection of the plant and insect life which so abounds at that period and which might be injured by the inadvertent steps of the wandering brothers and sisters. Hence they stay in the *upasaro* (rest-house) where they find themselves at the beginning of the rainy season until the rains are over. These rest-houses are built for their benefit by laymen of piety who hope thereby to acquire merit, and their simplicity and lack of adornment is in marked contrast with the elaborate and luxurious construction and decoration of the Buddhist monasteries in Burma and Ceylon. They consist sometimes of large and barren halls in which are many beds, sometimes of four lines of cells surrounding a court.

[1] It will be seen that moral vows and methods for moral advancement form the heart of Jainism. Yet the strictness of these rules is toned down considerably for the layman who is not specially ambitious for his soul's progress. Mrs. Stevenson quotes an odd passage from one of the new Jaina religious schoolbooks. The subject under discussion is the eighteen kinds of sin, and at the end these words are added: "Children, you must not commit such sins aimlessly, where no end can be gained for yourselves and the interests of your relations are not concerned; moreover, sins should be kept

When the monk enters the order (and what I say of the monk in this paragraph holds equally of the nun) a lock of his hair is pulled out by the roots (hair by hair) and the rest of his head shaved; and thereafter at least once every year every hair of his head must be pulled out. He must own no property save a very few garments, a rod, five wooden pots, a straining-cloth, a veil, and a brush. These last three things are of special importance; for he must strain all the water that he drinks lest it should contain insects whose lives would thus be sacrificed; he must place the veil over his mouth whenever the atmosphere is such that there is danger of his inhaling insects, and also on official occasions as when preaching;[1] and with the brush he must sweep the floor before sitting down, and sometimes the ground in front of him as he walks, lest he should sit or tread upon some immortal soul. His food and water he must beg and (like the Hindu sannyasi) he is allowed but one meal a day. This, of course, must be entirely vegetarian and very limited in its choice of vegetables. For the stricter monks it consists chiefly of rice and other cereals, dhal or pulse, ghi, milk, molasses, fruits, and occasional sweets. All the water that he drinks must be boiled — by some one else. This is interesting, as it reflects the rather egoistic morality which to some extent characterizes most non-Christian (and also many so-called Christian) ethical codes. The water must be boiled (and must be drunk within four hours after the boiling) so that the monk may not be guilty of destroying life by drinking it. But he must not boil it himself, for by so doing he would certainly destroy life; at least so thinks the Jaina, and considering the drinking-water one gets in India he is probably correct. Hence some one else must assume the guilt of murder in order to preserve his innocence. Each day he must confess his sins morning and night to his guru or superior. A certain part of his time must be given to study of the sacred books and to contemplation and sometimes to the instruction of those laymen who

within bounds." Advice of this sort, of course, is not for the monk or for the layman who seriously desires moral advancement.

[1] It is not merely for the protection of insects in the water and air that the monk takes these precautions, but also for the protection of the air and water themselves, which, it will be remembered, are jiva, and which the monk vows not to kill.

care to learn.[1] In passing through an Indian village one sometimes comes upon a throng of natives, the men on one side, the women on the other, and between them, on an improvised platform, two wandering Jaina monks, facing the men and with their backs turned to the ladies, and with veils over their mouths, preaching on the duty of ahimsa or on some other moral doctrine, and evidently making considerable impression on their auditors.

The vows and rules of conduct of the layman must of course be observed by the monk with much greater rigor. Absolute celibacy and absolute renunciation of the world and all its pleasures are of course demanded. In addition to this he must practice certain austerities (which in proper Jaina fashion are divided into six external and six internal ones), such as longer or shorter fasts, endurance of excessive heat or cold, the practice of indifference, etc. "In a village or in a forest, examining the ground and recognizing it as free from living beings, the monk should spread the straw. Without food he should lie down and bear the pains which attack him. He should not for too long a time give way to worldly feelings which overcome him. When crawling animals feed on his flesh and blood, he should neither kill them nor rub the wound. Though these animals destroy the body, he should not stir from his position." [2] And the ideal monk will at the end depart this life by deliberate starvation. This, indeed, is no longer common; but it does occasionally happen, and the heads of the great orders often complete their present incarnations in that laudable manner. It is recommended as one of the greatest helps in the pathway of deliverance.

No summary of Jaina ethics would be complete without at least a reference to their catalogue of sins. The list is typically Jaina, and is elaborately subdivided. It consists of just eighteen principal sins, which are the following: (1) the taking of life, (2) untruthfulness (though little white lies are permissible), (3) dishonesty (including treason and law-breaking), (4) unchastity, (5) covetousness, (6) anger, (7) conceit, (8) intrigue or cheating, (9) greed, (10) over-fondness for anything or any

[1] Jaina monks are said, however, to be a rather ignorant and indolent lot, with little scholarly interest. [2] Akaranka Sutra, 1, 7, 8.

one (even too great affection for a relative or guru, since this hinders detachment from the world), (11) hatred or envy, (12) quarrelsomeness, (13) slander, (14) telling malicious stories, (15) fault-finding, (16) lack of self-control, (17) hypocrisy or *suggestio falsi*, (18) false faith, such as apostasy from Jainism or the partial adoption of some other religion.

Mrs. Stevenson, from whom I have taken this list, makes many excellent comments on the Jaina view of sin, two of which are of special importance. She points out, namely, the psychological insight shown in the Jaina treatment of these various sins, and also the actual application of the list. "The value of Jaina philosophy," she writes, "lies not only in the fact that it, unlike Hinduism, has correlated ethical teaching with its metaphysical system, but also in the amazing knowledge of human nature which its ethics display." In their treatment of the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth sins, for instance (anger, conceit, intrigue, greed), they make four degrees of indulgence, each involving more guilt than the preceding, and differing only in the length of time the indulgence has lasted. Thus, "they have seized on an essential truth, that the length of time a sin is indulged in affects the nature of the sin; for sins grow worse through long keeping." [1]

In the training of the moral life the Jainas make use not only of rules and vows but of confession and penance. At more or less regular intervals every good Jaina layman confesses his sins to some *sadhu* or monk, making use of the twelve vows and the list of eighteen sins to refresh his memory, and performs the penance assigned him. The monks make daily confession. Thus, as Mrs. Stevenson points out, "to judge this list fairly one must remember that it is not an unused piece of lumber stored away in the Jaina statute book, but that the most careless of Jainas test their consciences by it at least once every year, and that the more devout use it every four months, and some every fortnight. It cannot be denied that such lists, together with kindred enactments, have educated the Jaina conscience to some knowledge of what sin is." [2]

But the Jaina religion in its present popular form includes not only moral and ascetic rules, but genuine worship or

[1] *The Heart of Jainism*, p. 122. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

puja as well. The puja, of course, is to the Tirthankaras, and is probably an addition introduced by the laymen into the original moral philosophy of Mahavira. For the laymen felt the need of some superhuman assistance and so made the Tirthankaras into gods. And so all over India they are worshiped as such, in temples and by means of images which do not differ in principle from those of Hinduism — the puja bearing a close resemblance to the Hindu type. Both the intelligent and the ignorant Jainas unite in it; but with very different points of view. For the latter the Tirthankaras are gods, who hear prayer, are pleased by offerings and praises, and interfere to help their worshipers in response. The intelligent Jaina, on the other hand, considers the Tirthankaras merely as ideals and as being quite beyond the reach of all prayers and praises. As one Jaina put it in conversation with me, "the Tirthankaras are careless of us, for they are literally free from care." The intelligent Jainas are very logical here, and recognize that prayer in the sense of petition to such beings is quite useless. But these good atheists do not therefore stop praying. They frankly admit that prayer and praise are of value only for their psychical, subjective effects upon us; but these effects are real and desirable so far as they go. Some of these men bitterly deplore the unintelligent worship of the Tirthankaras, as being thoroughly inconsistent with the fundamental principles of Jainism. "Our gods [the Tirthankaras] are only human souls," writes a correspondent of the "Jaina Gazette," — "souls who have attained a blissful condition. Ex-hypothesis, these gods cannot and should not and will not take any part whatsoever in our daily lives. Yet every morning they are tortured to come down and sit in the large silver flat dishes; and thousands of Jaina throats quiver in incantations and eyes half close in delicious expectation, praying the Tirthankaras by name and generally to 'give us this day our daily bread,' to give us children, beautiful wives, faithful husbands, golden ornaments, victory in a false lawsuit, the pleasure even of seeing our neighbor robbed or ruined, and many more matters of higher or lower order. We claim peace and indifference for our gods. Why, then, this daily heresy and torture like the Chairman of a Municipality receiving petitions

from traders, burgesses, schools, and scavengers? Can we not leave our gods in their well-earned peace?" [1]

The writer of this article prudently refrained from signing his name, and I am inclined to think the article must have been considered rather heretical or at least ill-advised by the more conservative Jainas. For many of the more intelligent believe that with their ignorant theistic brothers the effects of real prayer to the Tirthankaras is on the whole rather beneficial. Hence the altruistic and intelligent atheist encourages his deluded brother to continue to pray to the Tirthankaras and to praise them, and in fact goes so far as to write prayers and praises for his use. He himself, meanwhile, uses prayer and praise only in the sense of meditation and because he finds them psychologically useful in their reflex effects upon himself. In fact the more advanced Jaina sadhus do not pray at all, but simply meditate.

There are said to be forty thousand Jaina temples in India, and many of them are among the choicest gems of architecture that India has to show. Often they are decorated with a profusion of carving and sculpture which has made them for many centuries the marvel of the traveler. The court surrounding the temple proper is usually itself surrounded by many niches containing statues of Tirthankaras, and in the inner shrine are one or more similar statues, perhaps larger than those without, and adorned sometimes with great jewels, but in other respects the same. For all the Tirthankaras look alike.[2] Not even a Jaina can tell *which is which*, except by the conventional symbols attached to them by the artists for purposes of identification. They all wear a narrow loin-cloth and sit cross-legged, with each foot resting on the opposite knee, the soles turned upward, hands folded in lap, eyes gazing outward into space, and with expression as vacant as the artist can make it.[3] This exact similarity and lack of individuality among

[1] *Jaina Gazette*, March, 1914, pp. 115–16.

[2] Cf. the picture on the jacket of this book, which is drawn, with slight modifications, from a photograph of a group of the twenty-four Tirthankara images, taken by the author in the great Jaina Temple at Benares.

[3] I have described here the Svetambara images. The Digambara Tirthankaras differ slightly, in that they are quite naked, their eyes are cast down, and they wear no jewelry in their foreheads.

the Tirthankaras is not for nothing, but symbolizes very well the loss of individual peculiarities and the complete indifference which pure consciousness and Moksha naturally imply. They raise also the unhappy query in the mind of the Western beholder: If I were to become *pure soul*, should I look like that?

In addition to the images of the Tirthankaras one not infrequently comes upon other figures in out-of-the-way parts of Jaina temples. In the Delwara temples on Mount Abu a female figure is many times repeated which a Jaina whom I found there told me represented a goddess named Chakesweri.[1] The Jainas, he said, have twenty-four gods and one goddess, and for his own part he certainly believed in them all and worshiped them. Other female figures besides Chakesweri there are also in these temples, sporting with jocund males, none of whom appear to be very strenuous candidates for Moksha. More significant is the presence of certain Hindu gods in Jaina temples. In the Jaina temple at Bombay I found an image of Ganesh; another image of Ganesh in the great Jaina temple by the bank of the Ganges at Benares; and in one of the remote Achalgar temples on Mount Abu an image of Ganesh, an image of Hanuman, and a lingam. Mrs. Stevenson reports other Hindu gods in other Jaina temples.[2] Many of the Jainas seem ignorant of these facts and flatly deny them. Others when questioned give various explanations, the commonest being that these Hindu gods are *servants* to the Tirthankaras, or are put in the temples in order to do homage to the Tirthankaras, or to bestow their protection, etc.; for most of the less intelligent Jainas believe in the Hindu gods, though they do not worship them. It is questionable how reliable the explanations given really are; and it seems more likely that the presence of these images is a token of a tendency in popular Jainism to slip back into Hinduism, as so many of its reforming predecessors have done. I think it improbable, however, that this tendency will have any great effect; for the leading Jainas

[1] He probably referred to one of the "Chasanadevis" or female powers who occupy in Jainism a place corresponding to that of the shaktis in Hinduism. They are, that is, the *powers* of the Tirthankaras. The Tirthankaras are supposed to have powers but never to use them.

[2] Ganesh is also present and worshiped at Jaina weddings.

are very proud of the independence of their religion and will probably be successful in heading off any movement of relapse.

One surprising fact about the worship of the Jainas is that they have but very few priests of their own, and among the Svetambaras the official puja in the temples is usually offered by Hindus (Brahmins), who know but very little of the Jaina religious and moral teachings, do not believe in the gods they are worshiping, and perform the rites purely as a professional duty. For their domestic ceremonies Jainas of all sects call in Brahmin priests, — i.e., Hindus. The Digambaras have priests of their own for their temple service. These priests are never monks, but laymen who adopt the temple service as their means of livelihood. Of course they neither preach nor teach; they simply perform the rites in the proper way. And this is not a simple thing. The performance takes a long time and must be done with precision. It begins with washing the Tirthankara image, coloring it in the proper spots, waving incense before it with the repetition of verses, and the making of offerings. In some respects this latter is the most significant part of the rite, and I was fortunate in seeing it particularly well done in the Syadvad Mahavidyalaya at Benares. This is a Digambara rest-house, school, and temple — a massive building near the Asi Ghat on the banks of the Ganges. As one enters the building from the river side he comes first upon a shrine with two or three small Tirthankara images. To his right is a long room or hall with many beds — the rest-house for wandering monks. The temple proper is on the second floor — a large and handsome room with a shrine containing two or three Tirthankara images at the end. As we entered four priests were doing puja before the shrine and had reached that part of the ritual in which offerings are made. In front of the shrine was a table on which a large brass platter was lying. The four priests were standing by the table, two on each side, with a serving-table near them on which were eight small trays each containing a different kind of offering. The priests would take up first a little white rice from one of these trays and sprinkle it upon the large platter before the shrine, then some saffron rice from another, then ghi from a third and pour it upon the platter, while one of them kept up an unbroken

chant of Sanskrit verses to which the three others occasionally responded — with no attempt, however, to sing on the same key as their leader.

How hard it is to see truly and report justly on the rite of an unfamiliar religion! To me this whole performance at first seemed almost childish — and doubtless my description makes it sound so to the reader. Yet my Jaina acquaintance who had brought me there, — a barrister who holds the degrees of M.A. and LL.B., and a most intelligent, cultivated, and *modern* kind of man, — standing by my side, was noticeably affected by the worship, so much so that after a few moments he stepped up to the table and joined the priests in making offerings and intoning Sanskrit.[1]

For, as another of my Jaina acquaintances explained to me later, the rite has a meaning. The eight kinds of offerings symbolize the eight qualities which the Jaina desires. Thus, white rice represents knowledge; saffron rice (which the Digambaras use in place of flowers, since flowers have souls) symbolizes beauty; another of the offerings stands for immortality, etc. Moreover, in all this puja (so I was assured by more than one) there was no thought of *giving gifts* to the Tirthankara, as though he had need of anything or would be gratified by them; the purpose of the Jaina is to enforce upon himself and upon those who partake in and witness the puja, the desirability of the various qualities symbolized, and the glory of the ideal represented by the Tirthankaras. The whole aim for the intelligent Jaina is subjective.

But, however the intelligent Jaina may view the matter, there can be no doubt that for the rank and file puja is puja, and the Tirthankaras are worshiped in the same sense in which Shiva and Vishnu are worshiped in the Hindu temple next door. And it is the rank and file who keep up the puja in the

[1] Failure to understand another's symbols may take place even between close friends of the same nationality and of different branches of the same religion. John Bright, the Quaker, seems to have found it difficult to understand the religious emotions of his friend William E. Gladstone, the High Churchman. Thus in his journal, under the date of September, 1873, is the following entry: "Hawarden. To Church. Service *high*. Three parsons. Mr. Gladstone most earnest in the singing, etc. To me much of the service seemed only fitted for very ignorant people." (Quoted in Trevelyan's *Life of John Bright* [London, Constable, 1913], p. 415.)

forty thousand Jaina temples. In most of these there are two services every day — so I was informed, — puja and scripture reading or chanting in the morning, and illumination with scripture reading or chanting in the evening. Of course Jainas (like Christians) stay at home from church occasionally; and the men seem to stay at home rather often. "Our temples," says the "Jaina Gazette," "are sadly, we almost said shamefully, neglected." Yet in the large centers one will find a fair attendance of women at the morning temple service and a few men — kneeling before the shrine, waving incense sticks, scattering grains of rice in the center of the room, and chanting some ancient hymn, with a good deal of fervor.

One of the most sacred of these hymns (the "Shanti Path") I shall in part copy down here, in the English translation made by the gentleman whom I referred to above as taking so enthusiastic a part in the puja just described. It is in honor especially of Shanti Jinendra, the sixteenth Tirthankara, and is offered every day in every Jaina temple. It will serve as a good example of Jaina worship: —

"I bow to the highest Jaina,
Whose eyes resemble the lotus,
Whose body a thousand and eight
Distinctions do adorn.
I bow to Shanti Jinendra,
Whose face has the moon's effulgence,
Purity, goodness, character,
And law in whom find shelter.

. . . . . .

"To Lord Jinendra, Shri Shanta,
The worshiped of all the world,
The giver of peace and joy,
I bow down my humble head.
Peace eternal may he award
To all the beings on earth.
May I obtain by his favor
The highest gift of *Nirvana*.

"Worshiped by *Indras* and the gods,
Be-jeweled with ear-rings, necklace and crown,
May the Tirthankaras bestow
Peace eternal all round.
Born of noble families
They gave light unto the world,
Their lotus-feet are adorned
By legions of gods celestial.

"On worshipers and believers
Bestow peace, O Glorious *Jinendra!*
Blessed be all subjects
And the ruler just and strong.
May rains be good and timely
And all diseases cease!

"May famine, theft, and pestilence
Not vex the people for a second,
May *Chakra* divine of *Jinendra*
Give joy to the world around!
Lords *Jinas* commencing from Rishabha,[1]
Destroyers of deadly Karmas,
Radiators of Perfect Knowledge,
To earth may Happiness bring!" [2]

Not a very inspiring hymn from our point of view, it must be admitted, even granting that it may have lost something in being done into English. Yet we non-Jainas are hardly in a position to judge it fairly, nor to form any just estimate of what it may mean to a devoted follower of Lord Shanti Jinendra. Possibly a Jaina would be equally at a loss to understand the appeal of the great Christian hymn: —

"Crown Him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon His throne."

In addition to the temples, each Jaina house is supposed to have a domestic shrine of its own, as the Hindus and Buddhists have, and here puja is regularly offered to the Tirthankaras. The Jaina layman is supposed to perform six daily duties, namely: (1) Puja. This is best done at a temple, but some carry hymn-books in which are pictures of the Tirthankaras, and these pictures may, for purposes of puja, be substituted for the temple images. The full puja for a layman requires forty-eight minutes, but most are satisfied with waving incense or a lamp before the image and offering rice. (2) Confession to one's guru. (3) Reading from the scriptures or repeating passages from them which have been learned by heart. (4) The "practice of vows" — some light asceticism as described above under the twelve rules of conduct. (5) Charity (especially to monks). (6) Meditation. Besides this daily exercise of the religion there are days of special observance — e.g., the

[1] The first Jina or Tirthankara.
[2] Published in the *Jaina Gazette* for November, 1913.

eighth and fifteenth day of each month, the full moon, and especially the annual festival (an alternating feast and fast) of Pajjusana at the end of the year, which lasts for eight days, the fifth of which is celebrated as the birthday of Mahavira. "The closing day of the Jaina year and of Pajjusana is the most solemn fast of all. Every Jaina fasts throughout the day from food and water, and the apasara [rest-houses of the monks] are crowded with men and women making their confessions. No outsider can visit these gatherings without being deeply impressed with the determination of all present to carry no grudge and no quarrel over into the next year. At the close of the meeting every one present asks forgiveness from his neighbors for any offense he may even unwittingly have given, and they all write letters to distant friends asking their forgiveness also." [1]

The Jaina religion, it will be seen, makes very considerable demands even upon its laymen, and its general influence upon them tends, unquestionably, to a very real kindness and goodwill and a certain sort of idealism. Not many of its laymen, however, carry out its *rules* with any great care; and the rank and file, even in obeying its commands, do so very unintelligently. So at least I was told by one of the Jaina leaders. I have said above that the scriptures are read or chanted in the temples and that it is the duty of the layman to read or chant them every day. But I must now add that very few laymen possess any of the scriptures of their own to read; and when they do read or hear them they are (to most of them) entirely unintelligible; for the Jaina scriptures are written in Sanskrit and Prakrit, both of which are unknown tongues to the great majority of the Jaina community.[2] Some of the most important of

[1] Mrs. Stevenson, *The Heart of Jainism*, pp. 259–60.

[2] The hymn copied out above, for instance (the "Shanti Path"), though recited every day in every Jaina temple, is quite meaningless to almost all those who recite it. In fact it was for this reason that the English translation was made and printed in the *Jaina Gazette;* the translator prefacing it with the remark: "The Text is in Sanskrit and the real and true import of the solemn verses is not generally understood. An English translation is therefore given for the information of our young men." I should add, however, that according to Mrs. Stevenson, who is intimately acquainted with the Jainas of Kathiawar, "most Jaina laymen are familiar with" a few of the more important scriptures.

their sutras have indeed been translated into English by Professor Jacobi in the "Sacred Books of the East," but of course this is entirely unknown to the rank and file of the Jainas. Very recently some of their sacred writings have been translated by native scholars into the vernacular and also into English, but not many of the lower classes make use of these translations. The adult Jaina once in a long while may hear a sermon from a traveling monk, or get a little advice from a professional guru or teacher, but beyond that his religious instruction is *nil*.

Up to a few years ago there was no attempt at systematic religious education for the Jaina children, and in fact for the great mass of the Jaina community there is but little to-day. Each family is supposed to have its guru who gives occasional instruction as to moral and religious duties, but this instruction does not go very deep nor is it systematic. Recently a few local schools have been started with a few very antiquated textbooks; but there is still nothing corresponding to our Sunday School or to our weekly sermon — nothing, in short, to reach the great mass of the Jaina community, whether young or old. The religious education of the Jaina boy and girl consists (1) in what he gets from his guru and picks up incidentally at home and in the temple when taken to worship, and (2) in certain prayers which he has to commit to memory and say over morning and night. These are intended to purge him from the sins of the preceding night and day, and if understood and appreciated they would (so my Jaina informant assured me) prove helpful in the moral life. But they are in Prakrit and are learned and recited in Prakrit and often with no inkling as to their meaning. The father does not tell his son their meaning because he does not know it himself. But both father and son repeat the meaningless syllables regularly, twice every day.

I am glad to be able to say that no one recognizes these sad failings more openly, and no one deplores them more deeply or cries out on them more insistently, than some of the Jaina leaders themselves. My account of the Jainas' use of meaningless prayers and their ignorance of their own scriptures and religion was taken almost word for word from a Jaina acquaint-

ance. And the following quotations from the "Jaina Gazette" will give further illustration of the frankness of the leaders on this matter and their earnest desire to bring about reform: —

"If Jainism has yet to live it *must* come up to date. Old dogmas alone won't do. The garbled and unauthenticated accounts of old Jaina glory are not much. Keen-witted History and scrupulous Logic have to certify to our fitness before we can get admission to the halls where truth is sifted and weighed and the claims of different creeds adjudged. Jainism has got the true gold in it; but it lies upon us to prove that it is so. . . . General Booth's Salvation Army is coming to India to take the criminal tribes in hand to reform them. Is it not fair to ask the Jainas: What have you done to make life better and happier for your fellow human beings?" [1]

"Some of the Jainas may be good, perhaps despite their birth in a Jaina family, but Jainas on the whole have successfully made ceaseless efforts to divest themselves of all that was best in Jainism. Knowledge of Jainism is almost extinct. Very few original texts are extant; they are unknown to Jaina masses, even to their learned leaders, and very rarely read even in private, what to say of public meetings. The spiritual or rather anti-spiritual food of the masses is derived partly from crude, half-Jaina, half-non-Jaina truths or half-truths, and partly from superstitions upon which their lives are based in our towns and villages." [2]

Nor is this all. The Jaina leaders find cause for discouragement and sadness, not only in the spiritual condition of their fellow-religionists, but also because of what the "Jaina Gazette" calls "the steady swindling down" of their numbers. That the Jaina religion is destined to decline steadily throughout our present era, and at last become (temporarily) extinct, is, strangely enough, one of the beliefs of this rather strange people. And now that facts seem to be verifying their faith they naturally look forward with considerable anxiety to the future. The "Jaina Gazette" reports that between 1891 and 1901 the number of Jainas fell from about 1,500,000 to 1,334,000, and that according to the census of 1911 it had fallen by that year to 1,248,000. This means a decrease for the last

[1] January, 1911, p. 3. [2] May-September, 1911, p. 74.

decade of $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. In the same decade the Hindus increased 5 per cent, the Moslems 6.7 per cent, and the Christians 33 per cent. What is the cause of this loss in numbers? The Jaina death-rate is shown to be lower than that of Hindus, Moslems, or Christians. Nor, if we can trust the writer in the "Gazette," who seems to be well informed on his subject, can conversions away from Jainism account for this steady fall in numbers. It does not occur to him that a religion which values celibate life so much above the married, which urges men and women to turn monks and nuns and regards the production of lawful children rather askance, has no right to be grieved but should rather rejoice at a steady decrease in numbers. But indeed there is certainly some other cause than this at work. This cause, in part, is the caste system. The caste system works against the Jainas in two ways. Jainas and Vaisya Hindus intermarry. But as a rule the Vaisya man, though he takes a Jaina wife, is not willing to give his daughter to a Jaina husband. The result is that many Jaina women become Hindus and their children are born as Hindus, while many Jaina men are left with no wives at all. And the division of the Jainas into small castes who will not intermarry often works the same evil. But the evil condition is greatly increased by the maintenance of the traditional feeling against the remarriage of child-widows,[1] which makes 153,000 Jaina women unmarriageable, and by the custom of child-marriage and other evil conditions which induce premature death, and thus considerably reduce the female population. As a result about twenty-eight per cent of the Jaina men under forty-five have to remain unmarried because there are not any Jaina women for them to marry.

This clinging to ancient evil customs, and especially this division of their small community into castes and sects, are

[1] In one little Jaina caste which the writer in the *Gazette* has investigated, there are 408 males and 381 females: 117 of these 381 are widows. "This means that 117 plus 27, that is, 144 males, cannot have wives under any conceivable circumstances. . . . On the day when these figures were taken there were 177 boys who were unmarried, while there were 73 girls only who could be distributed among them. That means that 104 boys must go without wives! And 40 grown-up men must have been old bachelors — either ascetics — or — or what?" (A. B. Latthe, "The Decadence of Jainas," *Jaina Gazette*, April and June, 1912, pp. 39–43.)

among the things most deplored by the intelligent laymen. The Digambaras and Svetambaras will not intermarry, and only a few of them are sufficiently advanced to be willing to eat together. Only recently they were beginning a law suit which promised rich pickings for the lawyers, because the Svetambaras refused to allow those of the Digambara persuasion to worship at one of the shrines sacred to all Jainas. And not only are there three great sects in this little community of a million and a quarter; these sects are divided (as I said on a previous page) into nearly ninety sub-sects,[1] each of which regards all the rest as more or less heretical.

And what is perhaps worst of all, because it goes deepest, is the fact that in nearly all these sects the emphasis is put on the outer form, and the development of the spiritual life of the community is left to take care of itself. The Jainas are a rich community and many of their rich men are generous and loyal. But until recently their generosity has usually taken the form of buying a new jewel to be put in the forehead of a Tirthankara image,[2] while expenditures for charity and education have scarcely been thought of. A sad state of things, indeed, yet one hardly peculiar to Jainism. Only last year in Christian Spain, in the city of Granada, the priests collected some forty-two thousand dollars from the pious laity to buy a new crown for the Madonna; although the city is too poor to afford pure water, has no poorhouse, and but few schools, and although the Madonna already had one very expensive crown which might perhaps have been made to "do" for a few years longer.

Fortunately there is a good deal of feeling against this sort of waste in both Spain and India. But in Spain the feeling is confined chiefly to those out of the Church; while among the

[1] The *Jaina Gazette* for October, 1914, gives a list of eighty-seven castes into which the 450,000 Digambaras are divided.

[2] A wealthy Svetambara gentleman is at present building a new temple in which he is expending twenty-four lakhs of rupees ($800,000). Of another Svetambara the *Gazette* for June, 1915, records that "in 1905 he spent Rs. 25,000 in entertaining the persons collected at a religious service held by him. In 1907, at a cost of Rs. 12,000, he built a garden house for the public, where a religious fair annually takes place. In making pilgrimage in company he spent Rs. 37,000. He set apart a sum of Rs. 20,000 toward grounding scholarships to students prosecuting their College study."

Jainas it is the leaders who cry out most earnestly against it. One of them writes thus: —

"One result of narrow sectarianism is to be found in the pious endowments, lavish expenditures over the erection of temples and in processions, and enormous waste of money in marriages. Not a moment's thought is bestowed on the education of the Jaina community; not an effort is made to relieve the sorrows of the unfortunate Purdanashin widows [those kept in confinement], who within the four walls of their houses endure untold miseries and to whom an unmerciful fate has allotted nothing but 'fierce midnights and famishing morrows'; and no provision or scheme is devised for the orphans, who for sheer want of care and protection drift into a life of sin and crime. . . . What an amount of real solid charitable work is here for him who is ready to do the work! But such silent, beneficent work brings forward no glittering reward, no dazzling compensation, and hence it is never cared for, it is never seriously taken up. The Jaina community has, hopelessly and in outer-seeing beyond redemption, fallen into lethargy and inactivity. Brethren! Time has come when we should no longer listlessly stand with folded arms resigned to fate and destiny, but when we must gird up loins courageously for a series of steadfast and laborious marches. Time has come when we should either prepare ourselves for the hard, severe, increasing struggle for existence as a community, as a force and power in India, or suffer ourselves to drop out forever from the list of living forces and active communities of this great Peninsula." [1]

These are stirring words; and a community which can produce young men so alive to the evils of the times as are the writers whom I have quoted (and there are many others like them) is far from moribund. It must be remembered also that the articles in question were written not for Europeans; [2] and

[1] Devendra Prasad in the *Jaina Gazette* for October–December, 1911, pp. 31–32.

[2] I have had many a talk with the writer of the article just quoted from and have questioned him closely as to the possible evil conditions or tendencies within the Jaina community. But all in vain. Scarcely a single undesirable feature would he admit; his fellow-religionists were apparently perfect. So complete was his loyalty to them while talking to a stranger that I came

for me to quote from them at all is, I confess, almost unfair. It is like disclosing the secrets of a friend's family which one has by chance learned. I am sure, however, that the reader will agree with me in feeling that the very frankness of these writers is itself a token of the moral strength that still remains in this ancient community. And the words have the men behind them. I have had the good fortune to know personally a number of these young reformers, and there can be no question of their earnestness and of their devotion to the rehabilitation of their religion and of their community. In fact they have succeeded in getting the reform movement well under way; and I must say a word or two concerning it before I close this chapter.

One of the organizations through which the reformers have done their work is the "Bharat Jaina Mahamandal," which is sometimes translated the "All India Jaina Association," sometimes the "Jaina Young Men's Association of India." It was founded in 1895 and its aim is to bring the different sects into union or at least coöperation, to arouse the whole community to the importance of education, and to bring about certain social reforms such as the ultimate abolition of caste restrictions and the alleviation of the sad lot of the child-widows. The "Jaina Gazette," founded in 1905, is its official organ. A somewhat similar organization is the "Mahavira Brotherhood,"[1] founded in 1913, with headquarters in both

to doubt his information. Yet when he comes to address the Jainas themselves he writes what I have quoted above, and much more of the same strenuous sort. One is uncertain whether to admire most this frank and unsparing criticism toward friends, or the equally downright loyalty of reticence when speaking to strangers.

[1] Its "Minimum of Conduct" for its members is interesting — and in many ways admirable: —

"(1) Hurt nothing as far as possible; eschew all flesh food.

"(2) Help and serve all (Jainas and non-Jainas) as much as possible. Expect no return.

"(3) Suppress the passions of
Anger — practice Forgiveness.
Pride — practice Humility.
Deceit — practice Love and Faith.
Greed — practice Sacrifice.

"(4) Cultivate Peace of Mind."

The high aims of the Brotherhood are more promising than its membership, which as yet numbers but eight.

England and India. It aims "to be a nucleus of Universal Brotherhood of all living beings," as well as "to be a center of Jainism in the West." Partly through the efforts of these societies and their members, partly through other wide-awake Jainas, the cause of religious and moral education in the Jaina community has made a fair start. A number of schools have been founded, — both local establishments and boarding-schools, — in some of which (notably in the two great schools in Benares) English and Sanskrit are taught, while in all of them the study of the Jaina religion is compulsory.[1] A series of books of religious instruction prepared especially for children was published in 1907.

Another effort that the reformers are making is an attempt to publish and translate as much as possible of their sacred literature. Until quite recently only a small portion of the Jaina literature was known even to the Jaina public. In 1884 Dr. Jacobi translated some Jaina sutras, but these compose but a small part of the Jaina literature. Most of it, still preserved only in palm-leaf manuscript, was hidden away in monasteries, especially in South India, and guarded by monks who, too ignorant to read it themselves, have regarded it as too sacred for any one else to read. In some cases it was with the greatest difficulty that they were prevailed upon to allow copies of these manuscripts to be made, even though the copies were to be kept within their own monasteries. Another obstacle in the way of publication was the prejudice felt throughout the Svetambara sect against allowing women or any of the laity to read the sacred books. In spite of these obstacles considerable progress has been made. A "Jaina Literature Society," with a European and an Indian section, has recently been founded with a steadily increasing endowment fund, and ancient manuscripts are being edited and translated. It is the purpose of the society to publish the text together with an English translation of all the Jaina Sacred Books.

In January, 1912, the "Jaina Gazette," in summing up the results of the reform movement, was able to point to the following institutions: about fifteen journals (in various lan-

[1] I should add that the two Benares schools which I visited seemed to be admirably conducted.

guages); three presses; eleven libraries (in addition to libraries attached to temples all over India); seventeen schools; an orphanage; and a Home for Widows. To this list, moreover, should be added a hospital,[1] now six years old, and two recent gifts of money, one of two hundred thousand rupees for the cause of education made in October, 1913, and another of four hundred thousand rupees made in December of the same year. A few months ago a Jaina lady made a gift of twenty-five thousand rupees for female education.

The movement for union is also flourishing. For several years each of the three chief sects has had an association of its own, with an annual conference, combining thus its many sub-sects, and in 1911 the All India Jaina Association made a proposal to all three associations that a united committee be appointed made up of representatives from each. This proposal was accepted by all the associations; so a first step was taken for complete union. Moreover, Svetambaras and Digambaras have at last been induced to eat together, though they will not yet intermarry. And in December, 1913, an All India Jaina Convention was held at Benares, at which representatives of all the sects talked in Hindi and English for four days on the superiority of the Jaina religion to all others and on the need for education and union. The convention was opened by a procession through the city in which (as the enthusiastic Jaina reporter put it) "the chariot car drawn by a couple of decorated elephants, proceeding slowly and majestically, the prancing ponies proud of their glittering jewelry and velvet trappings, the melodious music, the long line of flags, and the Guard of Honor formed by the students of the Syadvad, all combined to lend a glorious splendor to the scene." Each of the four daily (and nightly) sessions had its own president, Mrs. Besant and Professor Jacobi being among the number. Some of the speeches were scholarly expositions of doctrine, some were appeals for united action, and not a few were of the sort made by an enthusiastic convert from Hinduism who said (so at least I was told, for it was in Hindi and quite beyond me) that just as there should be but one language in the world and

[1] At Cawnpore. During nine months of the year 1913 it treated 18,833 cases. See *Jaina Gazette* for June–July, 1914, p. 232.

that the Sanskrit, so there should be but one religion, and that the Jaina, since it really comprehends all the rest. And as a fact, so high has enthusiasm reached, a movement is now on foot to build a temple and rest-house in the United States, and to send over missionaries to lead the Americans to Moksha.[1] At the close of the conference gifts were announced, to the amount of two hundred and twenty-eight thousand rupees, for educational and charitable purposes.

The Jaina reformers are still, of course, but a tiny minority of the community. Their movement has gone but a little way, and it is by no means sure of any large success. They probably will succeed in getting their sacred literature published, but it does not follow that any but themselves will read it. To be sure, some measure of success is here possible, for twenty-five per cent of the Jainas can read and write — a larger percentage of literacy than the adherents of any other religion in India, except the Parsees, can boast. Yet I am not sanguine of any very excellent results even should all the Jainas read their scriptures in their own tongue. For these scriptures were written hundreds or thousands of years ago, and, if one may judge from the samples done into English, but few of them have any great message for our times. They are not to be compared in value to the Upanishads or to the Koran or the Dhammapada. Much of the Jaina religion as contained in the books is quite devoid of inspiration; and much of it consists of logic-chopping, elaborate systematizations, and minute rules for the self-torture of rather useless monks; much of it is given up to the exposition of a psychology and cosmology that date from the times of Mahavira and to a naïve philosophy which no one, not even a Jaina, would think of accepting but for his belief that it has the authority of some mythical Tirthankara. It is vain to try to draw much living water from these sources.

On the other hand, when Jainism is taken in a liberal way,

[1] Some of the Jainas are very much in earnest with this idea of foreign missions. They have already six converts in England; and the *Jaina Gazette* says: "India, Asia, Europe, and America are all yearning for *one* universal, all-binding Brotherhood. We believe Jainism can satisfy this craving."

without leaning too heavily on sutras, angas, and agamas; when a few of its most fundamental ideas are stripped of their rather grotesque fittings and allowed to develop in an atmosphere of perfectly free thought, it makes a very respectable system, and ranks well among the religions of India. Its extreme and almost fantastic altruism, its great emphasis upon self-mastery, upon the dominance of the spirit over the flesh, its unshaken faith in the soul, and in the necessity of keeping one's self free from the cheap enticements of an increasingly materialistic age, together with some of its psychological suggestions as to mental and moral training — these things are of permanent value; and a religion that has persistently stood for them for at least twenty-five hundred years is worthy of very considerable respect.

Nor are these things merely matters of theory among the Jainas. Professor Bühler writes: "In practical life Jainism makes its laity earnest men who exhibit stronger traits of resignation than other Indians and excel in an exceptional willingness to sacrifice anything for their religion." [1] For my own part I went to India prejudiced against them from having trusted Hopkins's [2] characterization too implicitly. I met a number of Jainas and found them exceptionally intelligent men, broad-minded, and earnestly devoted to the welfare of their fellows, as well as remarkably hospitable and generous. These gentlemen testify that they are happier and better men because of their religion; happier men because the great aim of their religion is perfect peace and because its rules enable one to approach the goal; better men both because the moral commands of Jainism if conscientiously followed guard one against any very serious sinning and demand real altruism toward all sentient beings, and also because it holds up as ideals certain Blessed Beings who are conceived of as having once been men like ourselves and as having actually achieved through moral means the peace which all are taught to love.

The high valuation that the Jainas set upon this inner peace

[1] *The Indian Sect of the Jainas* (London, Frowde, 1903), p. 18.

[2] See his *Religions of India* (Boston, Ginn & Co. 1898), chap. XII. He characterizes Jainism as "a religion in which the chief points insisted on are that one should deny God, worship man, and nourish vermin" (p. 297).

which the world cannot give nor take away, together with the kind of ideal which they find and love in the life of their Lord Mahavira is made very plain in the descriptions given in their ancient books of the persecutions of the founder: "When he approached a village the inhabitants met him on the outside and attacked him, saying: 'Get away from here.' He was struck with a stick, the fist, a lance, hit with a fruit, a clod, a potsherd. Beating him again and again many cried. When he once sat without moving his body they cut his flesh, tore his hair under pains, or covered him with dust. Throwing him up they let him fall or disturbed him in his religious postures; abandoning the care of his body, the Venerable One humbled himself and bore pain, free from desire. As a hero at the head of the battle is surrounded on all sides, so was there Mahavira. Bearing all hardships. the Venerable One, undisturbed, proceeded on the road to Nirvana." [1]

In spite of its setting, so strange to our times and our land, there is something rather noble in this patient figure, something that suggests, at least remotely, Him "who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, persecuted, he threatened not." And there is something noble in a religion which can choose for its ideal this Winner of the Inward Peace, this Despiser of the Flesh, and looking past the body to the soul can call this bloody, dust-stained, insulted figure "the Great Hero," "the Conqueror." "As an elephant at the head of the battle, so was Mahavira there victorious."

I have dwelt with some detail in this chapter upon the metaphysics, the rites, the customs, and the shortcomings of Jainism. But it is only fair to add that to the broad-minded Jainas the moral element of their religion is the truly important element, and that they are ready to a surprising extent to see the letter perish provided the spirit lives. Thus they hail as true extensions of Jainism every movement toward the prevention of cruelty to animals, toward vegetarianism and anti-vivisection; every reform of dress that tends to prevent the wanton or cruel destruction of bird or animal life; and every effort toward temperance or the prohibition of intoxicants. The Universal Peace Movement is acclaimed as belonging to the very

[1] Akaranka Sutra, 1, 8, 3.

spirit of Mahavira, and Andrew Carnegie is regarded as a Jaina in disguise. "None can doubt," says the "Jaina Gazette" in reference to these movements, "that *Jainism is* extending, although the Jainas may not know it, and although those in whose midst the spirit of Jainism is incarnated, and is growing, may not know that they are Jainas."

CHAPTER XIV

THE MOHAMMEDANS

IT is usually with a sense of relief that one turns from a Jaina temple, with its twenty-four jewel-bedecked Tirthankara images, or, still more, from a Hindu shrine with its lingam and its Ganesh and Hanuman, its incense-laden air and its din of drum and cymbal, and enters the stillness of a Mohammedan mosque. No priests here, plying their trade and collecting their fees, no images, no incense, nothing to stand between the worshiper and the invisible God. Here, as is so often the case, the architecture itself typifies the religion which it enshrines. The plan of a mosque is severely simple. No inner and mysterious room, no idol shrine, no subordinate deities circling the central god, — just a court with a fountain for washing the hands, head, and feet, and an empty hall with a few prayer mats on which the faithful may stand or kneel and pray, a niche in the wall to give them their bearings, and a small platform from which one of their number may read to the rest from the sacred book.

Moslem theology is as simple as its architecture and its worship. No pantheon of gods with their wives, no semi-divine Tirthankaras, no avataras, no incarnations, no abstruse philosophy which only the wise and learned can comprehend — just the One God who made all things and does whatever is done, omnipotent, omniscient, merciful, and righteous; a heaven for the good and a hell for the evil, and a perfectly authoritative book, as simple as it is infallible, revealed by God to the Prophet — this is the sum of Islam.

Beautifully simple surely — that is one's first reaction on this creed. And one's second thought is the query, Is this creed not, perhaps, rather too simple for the very complex world we live in? I asked a Brahmin once what he thought of Islam, and he answered, "It is indeed very simple, and that is just the trouble with it. It is the kind of religion you would expect a

very simple Arab of the seventh century to teach his fellow-inhabitants of the desert. It answered their questions, but can it answer ours?"

The Moslem thinks it can. The answer to every real and to every possible question, he will tell you, is to be sought in the will of the one and absolutely supreme God. Says the Koran: "He is God beside whom there is none who should be served, the Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the Merciful, the Compassionate. He is God beside whom there is no God, the King, the Holy, the Author of Peace, the Granter of security, Guardian over all, the Mighty, the Restorer of every loss, the Possessor of every greatness. High is God above what they set up with Him. He is God, the Maker of all things, the Creator of all existence, the Fashioner of all images. His are the most excellent and beautiful attributes that man can imagine. Everything that exists in the heavens or on the earth sings His glory and His perfection, and He is the Mighty, the Wise." "The East and West are God's. Whithersoever men turn themselves, the face of God doth meet them there."[1]

By this monistic doctrine Islam seeks at once to render to God the highest glory and to answer all human questions. And this view of things seems to have satisfied the Prophet and his primitive Arabs very completely. But when through their efforts the new religion had been carried to peoples more familiar with the problems of philosophical thought, unforeseen difficulties arose: and greatest of all, the old problem of God's eternal decree and man's freedom and responsibility. I shall not here retail the long controversy of the Mutazilites and the Sunnites, but shall simply quote from the Creed of the great Sunnite theologian, Al Ashari, which finally settled the matter and made belief in man's freedom as heretical for Islam as St. Augustine had made it for Christianity: —

"Nothing exists upon earth, be it good or bad, but that which God wills: but all things are by God's will. None is able to do anything before God does it, neither is any one independent of God. . . . The works of creatures are created and predestined by God. . . . And God maintains the believers in obedience to

[1] In most of my quotations from the Koran I have made use of Sale's Translation.

Him; but the unbelievers He leads astray, guides them not aright, vouchsafes them not faith. . . . For should he be gracious unto them and help them aright, then would they be pious. . . . God is able to help the unbelieving aright and to be gracious unto them so that they shall become believing, but He wills that they shall be unbelieving. He has made them impervious to all help and sealed their hearts." [1]

If one were to confine one's self to the books one would suppose that this ended the matter and that all the Moslems have ever since been good fatalists. As a matter of fact they are nothing of the sort. What view the Moslems of Turkey and Persia take of this subject I cannot say; but I have talked with many Indian Moslems, — both learned theologians and ordinary tradesmen, — and they all insist stoutly that they believe in free will. They are quite unconscious of the fact that in holding this they are out of accord with Al Ashari — in fact the great majority of them have never heard of Al Ashari; and it never occurs to them that their belief in human freedom is inconsistent with the view that God wills whatsoever comes to pass. The following conversation, for instance, is typical: —

Question. "Does everything happen in accordance with God's will, so that nothing is done anywhere in the universe which He does not decree?"

Answer. "Yes, everything that happens and everything that is done by man or by any one else is in accord with God's will."

Q. "When a man sins, then, it is God that makes him sin?"

A. "Oh, no, not at all. God never wills sin."

Q. "How do you reconcile this with your former statement?"

A. "You see, man's *power* to sin, as man's power for all his actions, comes from God. But man's *choice* of sin is his own and is against the will of God. God is displeased at sin."

Q. "Then man's will is free?"

A. "Oh, yes."

Q. "Then some things do happen that are not in accordance with God's will?"

A. "Yes."

[1] Quoted by Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Theory* (New York, Scribners, 1903), pp. 294–95.

None of the Indian Moslems with whom I talked could be called fatalists in the usual sense of the word. And yet in one particular they were fatalists. Though God has by no means decreed whatever comes to pass, God has, they insist, decreed the time and the manner of every man's death. To my question how, if this were the case, a suicide could ever be held responsible for his act, they had no reply, but clung to their view in proper Moslem fashion none the less. With the exception of this particular case, however, as I have said, many Indian Moslems have drifted away from the orthodox fatalism of their mediæval creed. And this fact seemed very interesting to me. It pointed out a way in which the fetters of creed that have so long bound the Moslem world may be broken, and are being broken — namely, not by revolt but by simple ignorance. It is not in the Mohammedan to rebel against any generally accepted authority. But once an authority becomes generally accepted, it is likely to be generally forgotten; and the popular religion may, without knowing it, drift beyond it and adapt itself spontaneously to changing human needs. And if at the same time the thinkers of the community have fairly liberal tendencies and do not seek to force religious thought back into century-old forms, we may look with some hope for intelligent creeds and an elastic and growing religion.

Another illustration of this development of religious ideas in Islam will be seen if we compare Al Ashari's creed with the popular Indian Moslem view on the question of the nature of God. Al Ashari writes: "We believe that God has settled Himself upon His throne; that God has a countenance and two hands and two eyes. . . . We believe that at the Day of Resurrection God will be visible to the eyes, as the moon is seen upon the night of the full moon." [1]

I quoted Al Ashari to my various Moslem acquaintances and, to a man, they all insisted that they believed in no such thing. God, they all said, has no hands or eyes or body: these expressions must be taken figuratively. God is spirit and spirit only. He is the Creator of matter, but does not Himself occupy space — though He is in one sense present everywhere. They were very clear, moreover, that God's omnipresence must not be

[1] Macdonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 294–95.

taken in the sense of immanence in matter. God to them, in proper Moslem style, is transcendent only, and they were quite aware of the difference between their view and that of their Hindu neighbors.

This extreme transcendentalism and deism of Islam makes it rather inhospitable to mysticism. The Moslem God is very distant and as a rule He has nothing to say to individuals. He had a message for the race as a whole and that He wrote down and sent in the form of various books to the various Prophets. But since He sent the Koran there has been no need for any further communication between Him and us. In spite of its aversion to the immanent view of God, however, Islam very early in its history began producing mystics; and although it is certainly much less favorable to mysticism than either Hinduism or Christianity, one comes upon a touch of it here and there among many of its followers. The Sufis and Dervishes are, of course, the most prominent representatives of Mohammedan mysticism, and these flourish best, perhaps, in the Persian empire. But in India, too, mysticism is to be found, and in individuals quite outside the influence of the Dervish. Thus an old moulvie whom I happened upon — lying quite helpless on his bed from a paralytic stroke — said to me that God was very near him, and that sometimes God spoke to him in ways that were unmistakable; — that God said things to him and these things came true. "We have five senses," he said, "and through each of these knowledge of some sort comes into the soul. The soul is like a reservoir with five pipes leading into it. But the reservoir has also a spring. The water from all these six sources gets mingled in the reservoir so that you cannot at first tell from which source any given part of the water came. But there is a way of finding out. Shut off the pipes, and you may be sure that the water coming in after that is from the spring. So of the soul. If you shut off the five senses and all sources of evil thoughts you may know that what is left comes into the soul from God." Certainly this is a kind of mysticism. Yet the contrast between it and Hindu mysticism is very striking. God is still regarded as an outside being who pours knowledge into the soul as through a spring; and you know it is from God partly because it is not from the

senses, partly because it "comes true." Most Mohammedan mysticism is of a decidedly external nature — and the Hindus would add of a decidedly crude nature as well. And this brings us to the question of revelation.

There is an odd combination of liberality and narrowness in the Moslem view of revelation. God, they tell us, has revealed Himself at various times and to all peoples — "He hath sent men to every nation to teach them the right way." Hence in the sacred books of all religions some truth is to be found; and an especially large share of it in the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians. It is this aspect of the Moslem doctrine of revelation that is emphasized by such writers as Ameer Ali, Mohammed Ali, and Lord Headly in their attempt to exhibit Islam as the one universal and all-inclusive religion. And it is this emphasis on only one aspect of the question which makes the writings of these modern apologists of Islam so misleading. For while Islam teaches that God has indeed revealed Himself to all peoples, it also insists that these various revelations to non-Mohammedans have in every case become so distorted and vitiated as to be quite untrustworthy and practically worthless, and that they have all been superseded by the Koran. The Koran, on the other hand, has no human or fallible element in it. It was written not by Mohammed, but by God, and given to the Prophet through the dictation of the Angel Gabriel. Hence it is absolutely and infallibly inspired not only as to its ideas, but in all its words. God did not inspire the Prophet to write the Koran; God wrote the Koran and wrote it in Arabic, and the very Arabic words, being the words of God, have a virtue and a value of their own.

This exceedingly childish and mechanical view of inspiration has had — and must continue to have — its deadening effect upon all real advance of thought in Moslem communities. Moslems will, of course, deny this, but it is inevitable. A Sufi, whom I questioned as to the relation of Islam to scientific progress, insisted that Islam was in no way opposed to science — *so long as science conformed to the Koran and the Traditions of the Prophet.* Such necessary conformity, of course, means the death of free thought. Neither philosophy nor science nor intelligent literary criticism nor human and satisfying theology

can have any healthy growth when clapped forever within the plaster cast of such a dogma. The history of Moslem thought is one long illustration of this. There is, indeed, some slight latitude permitted in the interpretation of the Traditions and of the Koran. Thus, as several Moslems told me, the description of Creation in seven days need not be taken literally, as a day might be to God as a thousand years. Moreover, on certain questions there are contradictory statements within the Koran itself, so that he who naturally favors a liberal view may sometimes be able to quote the Koran as his authority. As a practical matter there is thus some opportunity for developing thought within Islam — as in fact we have seen when dealing with human freedom and the nature of God. But as a matter of principle there is no justification for the growth of thought developing beyond the words of the Koran. Apparently neither Mohammed nor any orthodox Moslem theologian [1] has ever had any real conception of the possibility of a developing theology in response to growing human needs. And in fact it is questionable whether any of the founders of religions except Jesus fully understood the great advantages of enunciating principles only and leaving the applications and the verbal formulations of them to the varying needs of subsequent ages.

But, as I have said, some practical advance in Moslem theology there has been — *in spite* of its doctrine of revelation rather than because of it. This is noticeable not only in its view of God and of human freedom, but in its doctrine of the future life. The beliefs of intelligent Moslems to-day concerning heaven and hell are, indeed, in no way inconsistent with the Koran; yet the steady tendency has been and is to emphasize the moral and spiritual aspect of the Koranic teachings and either to interpret the materialistic passages symbolically or to pass them over in silence. There is no doubt that both these aspects exist in the Koran, and the whole development, if such a word should be used, is purely a matter of relative emphasis. But when one compares the materialistic pictures of heaven that have had such influence in the Islam of the past with the views held by great numbers of Mohammedans to-day, the change in

[1] Of course there are liberal theologians who hold no such slavish position toward the Koran, but these men are heretical and extremely rare.

emphasis certainly approximates real development in thought. Several informants of mine — ordinary Moslem merchants — insisted that the descriptions of heaven in the Koran must not be taken to mean that it is a place of sensuous delight. They admitted that many of the lower Moslems so regard it, and that Mohammed wrote as he did for the Arabs who were around him. But they affirmed with emphasis that the real meaning of these materialistic passages is simply that each good man shall have in heaven what he most desires; and when we get there we shall probably not want sensuous delights even if here we think that we shall. No one knows, said they, what the joys of heaven are to be: but they will be spiritual — "peace from Allah" and the presence of God.

This emphasis upon the spiritual passages of the Koran and this symbolic interpretation of the materialistic passages is carried still further by the intellectual leaders of liberal Islam. The following, for instance, I take from a little book by Mohammed Ali, editor of the "Review of Religions": —

"The gulf that is generally interposed between this life and the life after death is the great obstacle in the solution of the mystery of the hereafter. Islam makes that gulf disappear altogether: it makes the next life as only a continuation of the present life. . . . The great facts which shall be brought to light on the day of the resurrection shall not be anything new but only a manifestation of what is hidden from the physical eye here. . . . The Holy Quran makes it clear that the state after death is a complete representation, a full and clear image, of our spiritual state in this life. . . . The pleasures and pains of the next life, therefore, though spiritual in reality will not be hidden from the ordinary eye as spiritual facts are in this life." [1]

Islam also holds that hell is not eternal, and from this the more liberal Moslems conclude that there will be infinite progress in the next life for both bad and good. "Those who have wasted their opportunities in this life," writes Mohammed Ali, "shall, under the inevitable law that makes every man taste of what he has done, be subjected to a course of treatment of the spiritual diseases which they have brought about with their

[1] *Islam* (Quadion, the Sadr Anjuman-I-Ahmadiyya, 1912), pp. 27–30.

own hands, and when the effect of the poison which vitiated their systems has been nullified and they are fit to start on the onward journey to the great goal, they shall no more be in hell. This is the reason that the punishment of hell according to the Holy Quran is not everlasting. It is meant to clean a man of the dross which is a hindrance in his spiritual progress, and when that object has been effected its need vanishes. Nor is paradise a place to enjoy the blessings only of one's previous good deeds, but it is a starting-point of the development of the faculties of man. Those in paradise are not idle, but are continually exerting themselves to reach the higher stages. It is for this reason that they are taught to pray even there to their Lord: 'O our Lord! make perfect for us our light.'" [1]

The odd combination of breadth and narrowness which we saw in the Moslem view of revelation is reflected again in the attitude of Mohammedans toward non-Moslems. Islam is regarded as the fulfillment and completion of all other religions — it is the crown of Christianity, just as Christianity is the crown of Judaism. Theoretically all religions have some measure of truth. Yet as a matter of fact the doctrine of the distortion of all revelations except that of Mohammed in effect nearly nullifies most of the really fine and liberal expressions which one finds in the Koran and in the writings of modern Moslems. There is practically no hope for any beside Moslems, Christians, and Jews, for only these worship the One True God, and only these (if we may trust the more explicit statements of the Koran) have had a genuine written revelation. They are "the people of the book"; and though "God hath sent men to every nation to teach them the right way," this book revelation seems to be particularly important for salvation. Jews and Christians may be saved if they are true to their respective revelations. But as a fact very few are. For we are assured the present Old and New Testaments have been badly tampered with, and to get at the truth which they originally contained one must have recourse to the Koran; and most Christians and Jews are strangely obstinate in refusing to do this. The Old Testament, moreover, commands the Jews to recognize Jesus as a Prophet of God, and if a Jew does not do this he will go

[1] *Islam* (Quadion, the Sadr Anjuman-I-Ahmadiyya, 1912), pp. 37–38.

to hell. In like manner the real New Testament (so I was assured by learned and ignorant Moslems alike — and they have the Koran for their authority) — the real New Testament, before its text was tampered with and vitiated, taught that Jesus was not God and must not be worshiped; and that he was not really crucified, but was taken bodily up into heaven and an illusory body substituted; and it also taught that Mohammed should come and complete God's revelation — for the Paraclete means Mohammed (!). Hence no Christian who worships Christ or believes in the Trinity can be saved. My Moslem friends were kind enough to intimate that there might be some chance for a Unitarian Christian — though they did not feel at all sure of this, inasmuch as Unitarians do not usually believe in Mohammed and the Koran. Belief in particular doctrines forms a large part of the Moslem method of salvation; and every religion of which this is true must necessarily exhibit a good deal of intolerance. Certainly the history of Islam has shown this in no small measure, and it is questionable whether the religion of the Prophet can ever throw it off altogether and retain anything distinctive.

In India, however, this intolerance is becoming steadily more and more a matter of theory only. The influence of British rule and the constant rubbing-up against Hindu, Christian, Jaina, and Parsee neighbors are having their inevitable effect. One acquainted only with the history of Islam, or with the religion as seen in Turkey, would, I think, be astonished at the tolerance and liberality of thought manifested by a very large proportion of Indian Moslems. As an illustration of what I mean, while in Benares not only was I invited to attend the Friday service and to kneel down side by side with the faithful during their prayers, but after the service was ended I was asked to make an address, there in the mosque. I am not sure in how many Christian churches a professed Mohammedan would be asked to make a public speech at the end of the Sunday service.

Of course this would not have been possible in all the mosques in India; and in a few of them one still sees the sign, "No Hindus, Christians, dogs, or other non-Mussulmans admitted." Still, I think there is little question but that the general tend-

ency among Indian Moslems is toward true tolerance and a certain kind of liberality in thought and action.

The active duties of the Moslem are divided by the theologians into those which one owes to God and those which one owes to man. It is significant that prayer is regarded as belonging to the former of these two classes. It is not so much a means of getting what one wants, or of satisfying one's inmost longings, as a service which one owes to God. This view of prayer explains both the nature of Moslem prayers and the manner in which they are said. One must make his prayers five times every day at certain stated intervals — the first being before sunrise. Before saying them one must first wash his head, hands, and feet, and while praying he must kneel and bow down in the direction of Mecca. The prayers he is to say are definitely specified — being all made up of verses from the Koran. He may, of course, add as many petitions of his own as he cares to; but in each of his five daily prayers he must begin with the following: —

"In the name of Allah, the Merciful and the Compassionate." "All holy praises are due to God, who out of his mercy provides for our welfare before we have done aught to deserve it, the Merciful God who rewards our deeds mercifully." "Sole judge of the Day of Judgment who has not given to any one else His right to judge his creatures." "Thou to whom all these praises are due, Thee alone do we worship and of Thee alone do we seek assistance in all matters." "Guide us, O Lord, into the right path which leads to Thee, and let it be so that, remaining firm in that path, we may be guided to walk in the footsteps of persons upon whom have been thy blessings and favors. Save us, O Lord, from the path of the people upon whom has been Thy wrath and of those who, having fallen into errors, have gone astray and not reached Thee." "Be it so, O God!"

The nature of these prayers shows the purpose aimed at by them. From the objective point of view they are praises rendered to the Most High, and subjectively considered they have value in focusing the mind five times every day on God and on the desirability of righteousness. An admirable institution this; but one unfortunately whose value has been largely

vitiated in the usual Indian fashion. The prayers must be said in Arabic, and to the great majority of Indian Mohammedans Arabic is an unknown tongue, so that the prayers which they recite are merely songs without words. They learn to make the noises, but most of them have either never learned the meaning of them or have long ago forgotten it. Of course there are very many Moslems — even among the uneducated — of whom this is not true. Many make a point of finding out what the prayers mean and of following in their minds the meaning of the strange Arabic syllables. Many also, at the close of the formal prayers, add petitions of their own and pray to God as genuinely as any Christian. I think no one can watch a Mohammedan praying alone at sunset-time, or can attend the public prayers in the mosque on Friday without feeling that there is here a great deal of genuine devoutness and true worship.

This, at any rate, has been my experience. I have attended the "Friday mosque" more than once and have always come away considerably impressed. The throng of Mussulmans worshiping in the great mosque at Delhi — rising, kneeling, prostrating themselves on the pavement, with the uniformity of a military drill and as if all mastered by one impulse — this is a memorable sight. But perhaps even more impressive is the worship in a small mosque with only twenty or thirty present. The leader is seated on a flight of four or five steps which serve as a pulpit, facing the audience, who sit on mats, Indian fashion, in two or three rows on the floor. The service begins by one of the men in the front row (not the leader) chanting in slow and musical cadences the Arabic prayers which I have copied out above. Then the leader takes his stand on the top of his step-ladder pulpit and reads a sermon which is usually not of his own writing, but is taken from a book of sermons from the pen of some well-known preacher. The sermon ended, he descends and places himself in front of the audience and with his back toward them, so that he as well as they may face the *kiblah* or niche which shows the direction of Mecca. The congregation rises and the leader intones a series of Arabic prayers, with a long pause after each — thus giving an opportunity for silent prayer and meditation. Each prayer is accompanied by a change of attitude, leader and congregation bowing, rising,

kneeling, and prostrating themselves as one man. At the close of the service few, if any, go at once; nearly all stay and continue praying, — each one silently and by himself. In this service in the mosque there is a simplicity that must appeal to every observer. It has a directness that makes it very much more comprehensible to the stranger than is, for instance, the Catholic mass to the average Protestant.

Besides prayer, the Moslem's duties toward God may be summed up under fasts, feasts, and pilgrimages. Pilgrimages are common to many religions, and as practiced in modern times are usually an anachronism for which justification is sought in various ways. Intelligent Moslems defend the pilgrimage to Mecca as an opportunity for very great self-sacrifice. As a matter of fact, it is of course a survival from a primitive stage of thought; and as it brings the pilgrim into Arabia it is the last stronghold of old-fashioned Mussulman intolerance and fanaticism.

The manner of observance of the great Mohammedan fast, in the month Ramadhan, varies with the observer. For those who really wish to grow in grace it is an opportunity for crucifying the flesh and refining the spirit. Since abstaining from food, however, is required only during the day, those who care to fulfill only the letter of the law may, if they like, turn the fast into a feast during the hours of night, or even into a revel. My Moslem friends assured me that this was very uncommon in India, and as Ramadhan did not come round during my stay there I have no way of judging for myself. Certainly the picture which they drew of the terrible thirst which they voluntarily suffer all day long and day after day, when Ramadhan comes in the hot season, made me feel that to be a good Moslem at such a time required considerable firmness of will and very real devotion to one's religion.

The celebration of Muharram is certainly not a religious duty comparable to the Mecca pilgrimage or the fast of Ramadhan. It has no basis, as they have, in the Koran — as indeed is obvious inasmuch as the event which it commemorates occurred many years after Mohammed's death. Yet it is a religious custom of considerable importance for both Sunnis and Shiahs all over India and should have some mention here. The

Muharram festival commemorates the death of al-Hasan and al-Husayn, the two sons of Ali and Fatima (hence grandsons of the Prophet), who in the opinion of the Shiahs were the rightful inheritors of the Kaliphate, and who many even of the Sunnis admit were good men and died as martyrs in an attempt to prevent the Kaliphate from falling into the hands of an ambitious and wine-drinking politician. Hence in every town in India Sunnis and Shiahs join in the celebration. *Taziahs*, or imitation tombs of pasteboard, brilliantly decorated (representing the tombs of the two young martyrs), are carried through the streets in procession and the less costly of them destroyed amid pretended weeping (the more elaborate being put safely away for next year). The central figure in the parade is a white horse, covered with a white and red cloth, representing the bloody charger of al-Husayn as he returned riderless from the battle. Five days are given up to the festivities and the last one ends up with a kind of miracle-play, or a series of vaudeville performances, and the whole town, Hindu and Mohammedan alike, turns out and has a good time. I should add that many of the more religious Moslems deplore the Muharram celebration and take no part in it. But there is no doubt that it forms one of the external observances of the rank and file and is regarded by them as having at least something to do with religion.

If prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage constitute the Moslem's duties toward God, his duty toward man is summed up in the word *charity*. And in the teaching of this duty the Moslem means something very definite and businesslike. All Moslems but the very poor are required by their religion to put aside a certain percentage of their income to be disbursed in charity. Theoretically this money should be collected by the State — for theoretically the State is a theocracy with the Prophet or the Kaliph at its head. But in States which are purely human institutions the money is collected in each community by the imam — an individual chosen by his fellows for the performance of certain duties relating to the religion. The money thus collected is devoted to helping the poor, assisting slaves in buying back their freedom, and debtors in paying their debts, and helping strangers in the land who need assistance.

One of the most important of one's duties toward one's fellows is the education of the young and particularly their training in morals and religion. It cannot be said that in the performance of this duty the Mohammedan is very intelligent or even very zealous.[1] Most Moslem boys are sent to a Moslem school to learn Arabic and the Koran before going to the regular school to learn English. Children in India as a rule, however, have things pretty much their own way and no great effort is made to force them to learn. And so it happens that most Mohammedan boys shirk their lessons (for boys will be boys even in India) and learn very little Arabic, and that little they soon forget. One enthusiastic Moslem told me that perhaps a quarter of the Moslem men and boys in Benares could read Arabic. An equally zealous but much more intelligent fellow-religionist, on hearing this, added it was probably true, but very misleading; perhaps a quarter do know how to read Arabic, but this means merely that they know *how to read it aloud* — they can make the sounds, but have little notion as to the meaning. It is in this manner that the Arabic prayers are said and that the Koran is read in the homes of the great majority. It is read aloud in Arabic, not one of the family having a notion as to what it is all about; it is kept on a shelf and honored, but neither obeyed nor understood.

Of course this is not true of all Moslems. In many homes, lowly as well as learned, a mullah comes once a month or oftener and reads the Koran to the family, first in Arabic, then in translation. Good translations of the Koran in the vernacular exist and are used by a few. And of course the vernacular preaching in the Friday mosque is a source of very real religious education for children and adults alike.

The absence of a professional priestly class in Islam is one of the causes of the lack of systematic religious education. The mullahs or moulvies are merely learned laymen who are well read in the Koran and its theology and are sometimes willing

[1] According to the 1911 census, the Moslems are the most illiterate religious community in India, only 6.9 per cent of the males and .4 per cent of the females being able to read. For Hindus the percentages are 10.1 and .8 (for males and females respectively), while for Christians they are 29.3 and 13.5. The percentage is still higher for the Buddhists and Jainas and highest of all for the Parsees.

to preach and teach it. The imam who presides at the Friday services is in no sense a priest, but merely a member of the community paid by the others to read the Koran and a sermon and to have charge of the mosque. He is chosen, not because of any special learning or zeal on his part, but often merely because he is unable to make a living in any other way. As a result there is no one who feels it his special duty to look after the moral and spiritual welfare of the community. On the other hand, there are marked advantages in this absence of a priestly class, — advantages too patent to any one acquainted with Hinduism to need enumeration. The Moslem is subject to no ecclesiastical tyranny and at the mercy of no superstition-spreading authority. There is no mediator, human or semi-divine, between him and his God. He goes in prayer directly to Allah, and to Him alone is he responsible for his beliefs and his actions.

Religious and moral education among the Moslems in India seems to have reached a pretty low ebb. My friends assured me, however, that there were signs of the turning of the tide, and they were somewhat hopeful (though by no means sanguine) over the future. The progressive movement may be said to have its center in Aligarh, where there is a large Mohammedan college. The college was founded by the great Moslem reformer Syed Ahmad Khan, with the aim of providing young men with a sound education, the central part of which should be a thorough grounding in the doctrines of the Moslem faith and a prolonged and careful moral training. According to the Prospectus, a learned and pious moulvie supervises the religious life of the students. "The first period of each day's work is devoted to the lectures on theology and attendance on these lectures is enforced by regulations as stringent as those regulating the ordinary class work of the college. Attendance at prayers in the college mosque is also compulsory. On Friday the college is closed at eleven so as to allow the students to attend at Juma prayers, after which a sermon is delivered by the resident moulvie." [1]

The college at Aligarh is not the only institution whose aim is to give the Moslem youth an education that shall be founded

[1] Quoted in Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements in India*, p. 94.

in religion. Few other Moslem schools, however, have the same liberal tendencies of thought to be found at Aligarh. A number of associations have been formed with the double purpose of giving to young men a sound orthodox religious training, and of combating efforts of Christian and Arya missionaries and writers.

Besides these movements for the religious education of the young, something is being done by means of itinerant preachers to rekindle the light of a truer Islam among nominal Mohammedans; and even to spread the faith of the Prophet among the lower strata of Hindu society. One of the sufis with whom I talked spends most of his time traveling about northern India exhorting his fellow-Moslems to purer lives and a stricter Mohammedanism; and he is only one of many revivalists (as we should call them) who travel about, largely at their own charges, from city to city, preaching in the mosques, addressing small groups of the faithful in private homes, and exhorting individuals to a stricter observance of the behests of the Prophet. The influence of these men, however, must not be overrated, for their numbers are few. A community of a hundred thousand Moslems may get two or three such visits during the course of a year; and many a village is almost untouched by their influence. But the need of their ministration is very real, for a large proportion of the sixty-seven million Moslems in India knows but little about their religion. "Of many, nominally Muslims," writes Professor Arnold, "it may be said that they are half Hindus: they observe caste rules, they join in Hindu festivals and practice numerous idolatrous ceremonies. In certain districts large numbers of Mohammedans may be found who know nothing of their religion but its name: they have no mosques, nor do they observe the hours of prayer." [1]

Most of the work of Moslem preachers is devoted to winning back these lost sheep; but the effort at gaining new converts from heathen darkness has never been given up. Islam has always been a missionary religion and it is so to-day. Moslem missions have been of a different sort from the Christian, but quite effective none the less: and their influence has been

[1] *The Preaching of Islam* (second edition. New York, Scribners, 1913), p. 286.

almost equal to that of conquest in spreading the faith of the Prophet in the really marvelous manner to which history bears witness. Up to the close of the last century Islam possessed practically no institutions corresponding to our foreign missionary societies and our *Collegio di Propaganda Fide.* Instead of paid missionaries, individual enthusiasts have undertaken the missionary venture, living in Oriental simplicity upon the pittance contributed by their converts or by the "heathen" among whom they labored. And besides these men, who have given up all their time to the spreading of the faith, innumerable men and women engaged in ordinary occupations have felt the preaching of Islam to the non-Moslems among whom they lived to be an incidental but exceedingly important duty. Especially has this been true of the Moslem trader, who has carried — and is carrying — along with his commercial wares, the message of the Prophet to the utmost corners of Asia, Africa, and Polynesia. It is to these unsystematic methods of propaganda that Islam has owed its converts during the past two centuries; but in imitation of Christian methods, more systematic efforts are now being made by Indian Moslems. Professor Arnold [1] enumerates seven Moslem missionary societies (as we should call them) in various parts of India. Their missionaries adopt the methods used by their Christian opponents, especially street-preaching,[2] and their success during the last thirty years or more has been considerable. In 1887 a writer in the "Spectator" could say, "We are quoting the results of long and minute enquiry when we say that in India the average addition to Islam by conversion exceeds a hundred thousand a year." [3] It is questionable whether this rate has been continued to the present time; in the decade, 1891–1901, the increase was at the rate of 8.9 per cent, whereas in 1901–11 it fell to 6.7 per cent — a rate of increase no higher than that of the total population. Still a considerable amount of proselyting is undoubtedly going on,[4] especially among the low-caste Hindus, who find the same improvement in their social

[1] See Appendix III to *The Preaching of Islam.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 285.

[3] *Spectator* for October, 1887, p. 1383.

[4] I should add that there are at present three (heterodox) Moslem missionaries laboring in England.

condition by embracing Islam that often prompts them to accept Christianity.

And it should be added that with this social improvement goes a very real moral and religious advance. In view of this fact it is often astonishing to note the hostility manifested by Christian missionaries and other Christians toward this Moslem movement. In the zeal of proselyting and the zest of playing the game and beating the other fellow, they seem often to be altogether careless of the real spiritual progress made by the convert to Islam; as if the great aim were not the uplift of India's oppressed and benighted millions, but the swelling of the numbers in the next missionary report.[1]

This effort to teach both ignorant Moslems and low-caste Hindus the most elementary principles of Islamic monotheism and morality is by far the most important part of the Mohammedan reform movement. The attempt to liberalize Moslem theology is not meeting with any great success nor are its prospects at present very bright. A few really liberal thinkers there are, indeed, working most enthusiastically in defense of a spiritual and glorified Islam (such as never was on land or sea!); men who are seeking to spread what their leader calls "the spirit of Islam," rather than the letter.[2] Their influence, however, is decidedly limited and for some years to come, at any rate, it is hardly to be hoped that this new leaven will leaven any appreciable part of the Mohammedan lump. The message "Back to the Koran!" on the other hand, — with a correlated effort to purify popular Islam from various Hindu superstitions and late accretions, — is more promising, though it can hardly be said to offer much to the really intelligent and modern Moslem. To the average ignorant Moslem it is, indeed, a step in advance; for the animistic and non-moral superstitions to which I referred just now as "late accretions" are, of course, really much older than Mohammed and date from several

[1] It should be said, however, in explanation of the missionary's position that he is considering the ultimate welfare of the convert and of India, and that he realizes how much more difficult it is to convert a Moslem to Christianity than a low-caste Hindu. If the low-caste Hindu is ever to become a Christian it is important that he should not be made a Moslem. It is a case of the *good* being the worst enemy of the *best.*

[2] See Amir Ali's *The Spirit of Islam* (Calcutta, Lahiri, 1902).

thousand years B.C. Yet we, who are not of the Faithful and who believe that the Koran was written in the seventh century and in Arabia (instead of before all time and in heaven), cannot regard the process of tying up more tightly to that rather primitive book as an assurance of any very great progress. A section of the modern world whose leaders are intent chiefly on making fast its moorings to 622 A.D. is destined to find itself quite lonely before long. And after all, the most hopeful sign for the future of Mohammedanism is not the attitude of its scholars, but the fact that there are some indications of a *general feeling* of the necessity of better education among all the more intelligent.

One more token of progress, or at least of the possibility of progress, is the increasing number of *sects* throughout Moslem India. The orthodox Sunnis bewail this, but it is a healthy sign none the less, and shows that, at least within certain narrow limits, many Moslems are able and eager to do some thinking and choosing for themselves. The points of difference that divide the sects, to be sure, are often ancient quarrels that should have been made up long ago, or questions of doctrine and life that seem to most Westerners surprisingly trivial or antiquated. The great division, of course, is that between the Sunnis and the Shiahs, whose chief bone of contention is the question whether or not the Kaliphs who were not of the house of Ali deserved their position. It is really an old political feud kept alive to-day by the fact that the Shiahs still curse the first three Kaliphs, while the Sunnis regard them as saints, and also by the fact that the Sunnis consider the Turkish Sultan in some sense the head of the Moslem world, and the Shiahs deny this. Each of these great divisions has its many subdivisions, some ancient, some recent, in origin. Thus most of the Shiahs insist that the "true Imam" or successor of the Prophet is hidden away by the Lord, to be brought forward by Him at some time in the future, while the Khojah Shiahs insist that His Highness the Agha Khan is the representative of the true Imam. The majority of the Sunnis are simply Sunnis, but there is also a great number of Sunni sub-sects, the most important of which are the Wahabis, a body of Puritans who condemn various observances — such as prayer at the tombs of

saints, the use of the taziahs at Muharram, the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, etc. — which ordinary Sunnis permit and approve. New sects are being constantly formed by enthusiasts who get a more or less local following. An interesting example of this is the sect founded only a few years ago by one Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Besides urging more exact obedience to the Koran and a purer life and worship, the chief points (and the only distinctive points) of his teaching were: (1) that Jesus was not taken bodily up into heaven (as other Sunnis believe), and therefore could never come again as "the Promised Messiah"; and (2) that he, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, was "the Promised Messiah." He was also, it seems, the Mahdi (whom Mohammed had prophesied) and the tenth avatar of Vishnu, but his chief rôle was that of the Messiah. He was greatly incensed at the claims of John Alexander Prophet Elijah Dowie, for it was pretty evident that the Prophet Elijah was unwilling to undo the shoe-laces of the Promised Messiah; and he offered to prove that Dowie was an impostor by proclaiming publicly that Dowie would die before he did,[1] — which, in fact, the Prophet Elijah was kind enough to do, the Promised Messiah managing to hang on to this wicked world till the year 1908. This his five hundred thousand followers throughout India naturally regard as a remarkable fulfillment of prophecy and incontestable proof of his Messiahship.[2]

But in spite of the unimportant nature of many of the ideas at the basis of most of the sects, there is often some sound feeling for moral reform at least in their inception. And it is high time for some such movement. For both religiously and morally large sections of the Moslem world are in a bad way. Rank superstition has been dominant among the less intelligent Moslems for centuries, and is far from being expelled to-day. In northwestern India and in Afghanistan, I am told, the rever-

[1] See "Divine Judgment in Dowie's Death, or the Fulfillment of a Grand Prophecy," *Review of Religions* (Quadion, India) for April, 1907.

[2] Dowie was not the only one whose death Ghulam Ahmad foretold. In fact his predictions of death and disgrace for various individuals came so thick and fast that at last the Government had to interfere and make him promise to keep these unpleasant tidings to himself. Before its intervention, however, the prophet had foretold the death of one hundred and twenty of the wicked in addition to that of John Alexander.

ence at the tombs of saints has degenerated into something very close to saint worship: — all my Moslem acquaintances, I should add, deny this stoutly, but I believe their loyalty and zeal here mislead them.[1] Certainly practices quite as far removed from the teachings of the Prophet are to be found in less remote corners. One of the most zealous Moslems I met told me, with shame and sorrow, of sights he had seen in Lahore — Mohammedans worshiping their taziahs in the Muharram procession, and bands of zealots going through the streets beating their bare backs with spiked chains. Similar ascetic practices are not uncommon in other parts of the Moslem world. In the feast of Nebby Mousa in Jerusalem I have seen Moslem ascetics marching up from the "tomb of Moses" with skewers passed through the festering flesh of their cheeks. Mohammedans have never been noted for their sexual purity, and both missionaries and earnest Moslems have assured me that they are growing no better. They are said to be worse in this respect than their Hindu neighbors — though not so bad, it should be added, as European Christians. Islam permits polygamy and has done very little to elevate woman above the position in which Mohammed found her.[2] Certainly woman owes very little to Islam. It is, however, a libel against that religion to assert that it denies woman a soul. Moslems believe that good women go to heaven and rejoin their husbands, and that married women shall in heaven have husbands if they want them. But the ideal of the marriage tie is for most Moslems not very lofty. The Prophet knew his own flesh

[1] There is plenty of evidence for this (see, e.g., W. Crooke's *Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* [Allahabad, Government Press, 1894], pp. 127–44). In fact there is nothing at all surprising about it, and it is to be met with in various parts of the Moslem world. In Syria I have seen (as every traveler in that country has) marks of superstitious reverence before the tombs of Mohammedan saints. Goldziher has shown how this and other similar heathen customs, common to Arabia and many other parts of the world in the days before Mohammed, were carried into Islam and have never been weeded out. See his *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle, Niemeyer, 1888), vol. I, pp. 229–63.

[2] This view is stoutly attacked by Amir Ali, in his *Spirit of Islam* (part II, chap. IV). He points out that Mohammed did something to regulate divorce and that the Koran regards marriage as a sacred institution. Perhaps this is more than "very little"; but it is difficult to be exact in questions of more and less.

pretty well, and was very generous in making allowance for the flesh of his (male) followers. One may have four wives, provided he can support them and keep them from quarreling; and divorce is extremely easy. Still, it must be remembered that sexual relations outside of marriage are possible for the Moslem only in defiance of Islam. A good Moslem cannot indulge in that sort of thing. Drunkenness has never been a Mohammedan vice, owing to the splendid earnestness and vigor with which Mohammed opposed it. And it cannot be said that the Moslems of to-day as a whole have forgotten their ancient virtue of temperance; but (owing no doubt to the influence of low-caste Hindus who must have their "todi," and high-caste Englishmen who must have their whiskey-and-soda) many individual Mohammedans are beginning to break the strict rules of their Prophet. The better Moslems deplore these tendencies among their fellows very deeply. One of them said to me: "Islam is the best and most moral of all religions; its ideals are the highest and purest and noblest, and if a man tried to be a true Moslem he would have to be a very good man indeed. But as a fact here in India the Moslems are a very bad lot. They are the worst men in the world considering their great advantages as the inheritors of the only true religion. Islam teaches temperance, purity, and honesty, but some Moslems are beginning to drink, and many of them keep prostitutes, and are very dishonest in their business relations. They are even neglecting the five hours of prayer and no longer go to the mosque on Fridays. They have forsaken the plain teachings of the Koran. It is probably for this reason that such terrible calamities have come in recent years upon the Moslem world, — the loss of empire in India and these last terrible defeats of the Turks. It is the judgment of God. God is casting us off because of our sins, just as He cast off the Jews."

I cannot but think that some of the moral slackness of the Mohammedans is due to the very worldly example set them by their human ideal, the Prophet. I have a good deal of admiration for Mohammed; and if history had not crowned him as one of the Founders of Religions and so forced a comparison, my admiration would doubtless be more enthusiastic than it is. But I never think of poor old fallible Mohammed introduced

into the glorious company of Zarathustra, Buddha, and Jesus, without having a picture of a country beau suddenly set down in a Parisian salon. There was much that was fine in Mohammed, especially in his Mecca days; but (to put it generously) he was also very merciful in judging his own shortcomings. It is said that a stream can rise no higher than its source, and certainly it seems possible to trace in the history of Moslem morals the influence of its Prophet's sensuous propensities, his unscrupulous grasping after power, his occasional hard-heartedness and even cruelty toward his enemies. I am not sure that the saying about the stream quoted above really applies to religions; in fact, I feel persuaded that it does not. As Homer was superior to his Zeus, so many Moslems have been better men than their Prophet. And not only better than he; they have been most kind to him and have done their best to retouch the reputation of the poor old man, and explain away half his shortcomings and forget the rest. It is almost pitiful to talk with a Mohammedan to-day about his Prophet and note the extreme efforts made to view all his actions in the most admirable light. He took Zeid's wife to his own harem, not out of any sensual desires of his own, but in order to please Zeid, who had become tired of her, etc., etc. The good Moslem will hear nothing of Mohammed's acts of cruelty and faithlessness; instead he dwells with loving admiration upon his unselfish devotion and his persistent preaching during the dark days at Mecca and upon the beautifully democratic simplicity of his life after he had become the paramount Lord of Arabia. Thus the historical Mohammed is being made over into a moral ideal more consonant with modern notions. Yet if modern feeling is influencing the ideal, the ideal that Mohammed actually set has had its effect upon modern Moslem feeling: and I think there can be little doubt that Moslem ethical ideals of to-day are much lower than they would have been had they started with a Moses or a Buddha — to say nothing of a Christ.

I would not, however, leave the impression that the Moslem ideal is low. It is lower than the Christian, but as ideals go in this world it is fairly high. The chief trouble with the Moslems (as with the rest of us) is that they do not live up to the ideals

they have. Judged by their own standards they are in a sad moral condition. Yet there are many left who have not bowed the knee to Baal. The very earnestness with which my friend whom I quoted above bewailed the sins of the Moslem world showed the strength of the moral ideal in many a Moslem heart. To men of this sort the stern Daughter of the Voice of God, who speaks in no uncertain tones in many a noble passage of the Koran, is the Supreme Ruler of life. An example of the strong control it exerts over even small details was shown me (quite unostentatiously and unintentionally) by the man from whom I have just quoted. He had been for years a great smoker, and the habit was strong upon him. During the six weeks of our acquaintance, he discovered that when he woke in the morning the desire to smoke was so strong that either he had to smoke before praying, or he found his mind filled with the thought of the smoke while saying his prayers. Thereupon he determined to stop smoking altogether, and to do so at once without any tapering off. It cost him two very unpleasant weeks, but he conquered and broke his pleasant habit absolutely. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with his morning prayer.

I have spoken of drunkenness among the Moslems, but I should add that the drunken Moslem is like the Sunday-School superintendent who robs the bank. We hear a good deal about both, but just because both are so uncommon. A missionary friend of mine told me once (and not altogether with sadness) of a certain saloon where the bartender was a Moslem. Doubtless what he said was true; but has it ever seemed worth while to any one to make mention of a saloon in which the bartender was a Christian?

There can be no doubt that Islam, if taken and obeyed in its most ideal form, is capable of being a great force for the moral life. To take one small point only — it is impossible (as one of my Moslem friends pointed out) to say one's prayers thoughtfully and devoutly five times every day, thereby directing one's thoughts to God and to the desire for righteousness, without becoming a better man. It may be of interest to some of my readers to see what is said of this more ideal side of Islam by an English nobleman who has recently turned Moslem; —

I refer, of course, to Lord Headley. He writes: "Though my gratitude for God's favors and loving care has been profound from my earliest youth, I cannot help observing that within the past few years, since the pure and convincing faith of the Muslims has become a reality in my heart and mind, I found a happiness and security never approached before. Freedom from the weird dogmas of the various branches of the Christian churches came to me like a breath of pure sea air, and on realizing the simplicity as well as the illuminating splendor of Islam, I was as a man emerging from a cloudy tunnel into the light of day." [1] Mohammedans, he believes, are better Christians than most Christian missionaries; and he adds, "I say 'better Christians' advisedly, because the charity, tolerance, and broad-mindedness of the Muslim faith come nearer to what Christ himself taught than do the somewhat narrow tenets of the various Christian churches. . . . I received a letter — it was apropos of my leaning towards Islam — in which the writer told me that if I did not believe in the divinity of Christ *I would not be saved.* The question of the divinity of Christ never seemed to me nearly so important as that other question: Did He give God's message to mankind? Now, if I had any doubt about this latter point it would worry me a great deal: but, thank God, I have no doubt, and I hope that my faith in Christ and His inspired teachings is as firm as that of any other Muslim or Christian. As I have often said before, Islam and Christianity *as taught by Christ himself* are sister religions, only held apart by dogmas and technicalities which might very well be dispensed with. In the present day men are prone to become atheists when asked to subscribe to dogmatic and intolerant beliefs, and there is doubtless a craving for a religion appealing to the intelligence as well as to the sentiments. Who ever heard of a Muslim turning atheist? There may have been cases, but I very much doubt it." [2]

In equally enthusiastic strain, Mohammed Ali writes of his religion: "It teaches men to display high morals under the most adverse circumstances; to be honest even when honesty is likely to lead one into complications; to speak truth even when

[1] From an article by Lord Headley in *Muslim India*, vol. 1, no. 10.
[2] Quoted in *Muslim India* from the London Observer.

one's truthful statement is against those nearest and dearest to one; to show sympathy even at the sacrifice of one's own interests; to be patient under the hardest afflictions; to be good even to those who have done evil. At the same time it teaches the middle path: it teaches men to exercise the noble qualities which have been placed in their nature by God while transacting their own affairs. It does not inculcate severance from one's worldly connections; it requires men to be chaste, but not by castration; it requires them to serve God, but not as monks; it enjoins them to spend their wealth, but not in such a manner as to sit down 'blamed and straitened in means'; it teaches them to be submissive, but not by losing self-respect; it exhorts them to forgive, but not in such a manner as to bring destruction upon society by emboldening culprits; it allows them to exercise all their rights, but not so as to violate others; and last of all it requires them to preach their own religion, but not by abusing others." [1]

These quotations, of course, idealize Islam — not so much by what they say as by what they leave unsaid. Its theology is primitive and crude, and there is little room within it for mysticism — though, to be sure, the sufis have insisted on bringing some mysticism into it, despite the deism of the Koran. Excellent as are many of its ethical teachings, they are at best only on a par with those of the Old Testament, and in spiritual insight and loftiness of ideal cannot be seriously compared with those of Christianity. There were, no doubt, many fine things about Mohammed; but as an ethical teacher and a moral inspiration he has not much to give to the modern world. And (most fatal of all its weaknesses, perhaps) orthodox Islam is bound — and wishes to be bound — hand and foot to the words and sentences of a book written by an Arab in the seventh century. If it could once shake off this bondage and take as its ideal something more lofty than the teachings and example of poor old Mohammed, there might be in it the making of a great religion. But, on the other hand, if it should do so it would lose what is chiefly distinctive in it and become a kind of Unitarian Christianity.

[1] *Islam*, pp. 59–60.

CHAPTER XV

THE PARSEES

IT may seem quite out of true proportion to devote a whole chapter to the religion of a people who number but one hundred thousand out of India's three hundred and fifteen million; but the importance of the Parsees in history, their prominence both commercially and intellectually in Indian society, and the remarkably enlightened nature of their religion will certainly justify it. As every one knows, the "Parsees" are the remnant of the ancient Persian Zoroastrians. When the Sasanian or mediæval Persian Empire fell before the rising power of Islam, at the battle of Nahawand in 642, the great majority of the Zoroastrians yielded to the direct or indirect persecutions of the conquerors and exchanged Zoroaster for Mohammed. A few thousand only clung to their ancient faith, and the majority of these, to avoid further persecution, bade farewell to their native land and migrated to the western coast of India. Here they were kindly received, and their settlements soon began to spread all over Gujerat, of which they have formed, from that day to this, the most important commercial class. In the census of 1911 there were exactly one hundred thousand one hundred Parsees in India, nearly all of them within the Bombay Presidency. Besides these there are perhaps ten thousand still in Persia, and smaller numbers in scattered settlements in other parts of the East — such as Aden, Ceylon, Siam, and China; but the headquarters of the religion of Zoroaster is in and about the city of Bombay.

The Parsee creed is still distinguished by the noble simplicity which marked the faith of their great prophet. Its nature may in large part be seen by the following authoritative formula or confession of faith which every Parsee child must learn in the ancient Zend language and which every Parsee, young or old, recites (in Zend) several times a day: —

"I am a worshiper of God [Mazda]. I am a Zoroastrian wor-

shiper of God. I agree to praise the Zoroastrian religion and to believe in that religion. I praise good thoughts, good words, good deeds. I praise the good Mazdayaçnian religion which allays dissensions and quarrels, which brings about kinship or brotherhood, which is holy, which is the greatest, the best, and the most excellent of all religions that exist or shall in future exist, and which is the religion revealed by God [Ahura Mazda] to Zoroaster. I ascribe all good to Ahura Mazda. This is the praise or profession of the Mazdayaçnian religion." [1]

The Mazdayaçnian or Parsee religion thus claims to have been revealed by God to Zoroaster. In the glorious company of the prophets this Aryan Zoroaster, or Zarathustra, as his name is properly spelled and pronounced, occupies a very illustrious place. According to Professor Jackson [2] and Dr. West, he was born about 660 and died about 600 B.C., being thus a contemporary of Jeremiah, and preceding by a century or less Xenophanes, Buddha, Mahavira, Confucius, and Lao Tse. He was born in Iran, among a people who had many gods and many superstitions and whose religion bore but slight relation to morality; and from the age of thirty he went about preaching that there was but one God and that He was preëminently a God of Righteousness. During twelve years of constant missionary work in various parts of his land he made but one convert. But he persisted in the delivery of his message until at last he had succeeded in converting one of the small states of Iran. And he died at last under the daggers of the heathen, while worshiping at the altar of his God, a martyr of the true faith.

In the "Catechism of the Zoroastrian Religion," which is regarded as a semi-authoritative statement of the faith, three doctrines are emphasized as the principal theological tenets. These are: (1) "the Existence of Mazda, the All-Wise Lord; (2) the Immortality of the Soul, or the Life Hereafter; (3) our Responsibility for our thoughts, words, and actions." Though the nature and existence of God are supposed to have been

[1] *A Catechism of the Zoroastrian Religion* (Bombay, Petit Printing Works, 1911), p. 3.

[2] See Appendix II, Jackson's *Zoroaster* (New York, Macmillan, 1901).

revealed to Zarathustra, the whole question is treated in the manner of "Natural Religion," and the "Argument from Nature" is called in evidence much more than the original revelation. To Ahura Mazda are assigned the usual attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, eternity, omnipresence, etc. He is also regarded as the Creator. And here we come upon a rather interesting point in Zoroastrian theology. The oldest of the sacred books teach that in addition to Ahura Mazda there is another powerful spirit who seems to be co-eternal with Him and who created all the evil things in the universe, as Ahura Mazda created all the good ones, and that for thousands of years there has been a struggle between these two, a struggle which still goes on and in which we may play our part. To many this has seemed the finest and most inspiring point in all the Mazdayaçnian religion. And a dramatic presentation of world history it surely is, for it pictures Time as a long battle between the Power of Light and the Power of Darkness in which the whole universe is involved; it emphasizes the duty of each man to choose in which army he will serve; it gives him confidence in the final victory of the good; and throws around each little effort that he may make, no matter how prosaic and insignificant it seem, the awful glamour of a cosmic conflict. This conception also does away with the persistent problem of evil, and spares the Most High all responsibility for sin, for the suffering of the innocent, and for the defeat of the ideal — things all too patent and too common in this wicked world.

But this frank dualism has seemed too "unphilosophical" for many modern Parsees, and they reject the accusation of being *dualists* with the usual repugnance which that word arouses in so many modern bosoms. It is interesting to see how they attempt to evade it. They tell us that when in the sacred books the name Ahura Mazda is used as in opposition to the Evil Spirit, it means not God, but a spirit created by Him to be a secondary Creator of the good things of the Universe, and who by an odd coincidence had the same name with the Most High. Both this Creator of good and the Creator of evil, we are assured (though with little authority from the Avesta), are "under" God, and God "works through" both. God, therefore, is not opposed to evil, but is the ultimate and indirect Creator

of all things that are, whether we know them as good or bad. "He is, in fact, not unlike the inscrutable First Cause, whom we may regard with awe and reverence, with love and hope, but whom we cannot pretend to define or to understand. . . . It is evident that this simple and sublime religion is one to which, by whatever name we may call it, the best modern thought is fast approximating. Men of science like Huxley, philosophers like Herbert Spencer, poets like Tennyson, might all subscribe to it." [1] In short, Ahura Mazda, instead of being the Great God of Righteousness, is repainted after the style of Shiva or even of "Brahman without qualities," to whom "shadow and sunlight are the same." It is pretty plain to what this emasculation of the splendidly definite and moral conception of Zarathustra is due. It is an attempt to make Zoroastrianism "approximate" to "the best of modern thought." In these days Herbert Spencer is a better name to conjure with than Zarathustra, and a religion which would be up to date must surely be "monistic." And so all the distinctive features of the theology of Zoroastrianism, with its unique advantages for a moral view of the world, are given up.

Given up they are, however, only if one will be logically consistent. And with the usual splendid inconsistency of the religious consciousness the Parsee divines who insist most strenuously upon Monism, persist in maintaining as emphatically as any one all the moral advantages which only a dualism can consistently claim. God is the Creator of evil as well as of good, He is the Power behind all things, the unknowable First Cause, etc., and yet He is also emphatically the God of Righteousness, the Foe of Evil, the Bringer of good things only, — in short, He retains, in spite of his promotion or abstraction or evaporation into an "All-One," most of the positive and definite and one-sided qualities which Zarathustra so persistently preached. Of course this is like trying to eat one's cake and keep it too, but it is the expression of a laudable impulse. And as a fact Zoroastrianism is for all the Parsees, except a few sensitive philosophers, in effect as much a dualism as

[1] Quoted with approbation from Mr. Samuel Lang by Mr. Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, in his paper on *The Religious System of the Parsees.* (Bombay, Education Society, 1903.)

ever. Its monistic aspect is reserved for a few very abstract discussions, and in fact is seldom brought out except when some non-Parsee makes the monstrous accusation that Zoroastrianism is dualistic. The rest of the time Ahura Mazda ceases to be the indeterminate and unknowable God back of all phenomena, whom "Herbert Spencer might subscribe to," and becomes the God of Righteousness and the Foe of Evil whom Zarathustra preached and loved.

In the opinion of the Parsees, in fact, the emphasis which their religion puts upon morality is its distinctive feature. Duty is something which its sacred books, with all their formalism, have never lost from sight — duty toward one's God, one's neighbor, and one's self; in fact toward the whole creation. In a particular way it has emphasized especially the duties of physical and mental purity, of health of body and mind, of productiveness and of charity. The whole of the moral law is supposed to be summed up in the three words that are on every Parsee's lips and early impressed on his mind — *humata, hukhta, hvarshta* — "good thoughts, good words, good deeds." The little Catechism to which I have referred says in connection with these three keywords that "it is these that lead us to salvation." "If you will always keep your thoughts pure, that is, if you will think of nothing but what is true and proper, and if after such true and good thoughts you will speak nothing but the truth, and if after speaking nothing but the truth you will do nothing but what is good and righteous, then Ahura Mazda will reward you for all that, and you will pass a happy life." [1]

"It is these that lead us to salvation." Salvation consists in part in the very life of duty, in part it is to be found in the rewards of the next life. Zoroastrianism, like nearly all religions, teaches a future life of rewards and punishments, but these are to be gained not through the usual Indian process of transmigration, but in a heaven and hell in most respects like those which Christianity has taught. As is the case with Christianity, moreover, heaven and hell may be pictured in more or less literal and local or more or less symbolical fashion according to the intellectual level of the particular Parsee.

[1] Page 16.

Many think of them as definite *places;* and on the other hand, one of the great Parsee scholars with whom I had a long talk believes that heaven and hell mean simply the continued life and activity of the soul after the death of the body, — that we shall go on developing in the direction of our deliberate choice, some for the better, some for the worse. The Avesta word for heaven is *Vahishta-ahu*, which passed into the Persian word, *Behesht*, an exact equivalent of our English "best." Thus heaven literally means "the best life." And my wise and saintly old Parsee friend teaches the children that when they strive from the Good toward the Best, they are already on their way to Heaven.

Humata, hukhta, hvarshta — "good thoughts, good words, good deeds, it is these that lead us to salvation." A significant and a noble phrase. If salvation is to be taken in a truly moral sense it must mean salvation from sin. He — and he only — who has attained to good thoughts, good words, good deeds is saved. And no one can do my good deeds for me nor think my good thoughts for me — they must be my very own. For righteousness is a matter of the will, and no one can will righteousness for me, and in my place. And so the Zoroastrian Catechism asks, "Then according to the teaching of our religion there is no savior for one other than himself?" And the answer is: "Of course not. Every man is his own savior. His deeds alone will bring out his salvation. A man is the architect of his own fortune. He is his own savior." Zarathustra has an honored place, indeed. He is the great prophet who first revealed from God to man the true religion; and as such his picture is in most Parsee homes, and his name is enshrined in all Parsee hearts. But in no further sense is he regarded as a savior.

On hearing the changes so constantly rung upon "good thoughts, good words, good deeds," one is tempted to say, "This is all very well; but is it not rather trite, or at least a bit indefinite? What sort of deeds *are* 'good deeds'? " — And to this the Sacred Books and the traditional teaching give an answer which, while it does not go very deep into the fundamental questions of morality, does give some degree of practical guidance. Mingled with a great deal of the undeniably trite, one

finds in Zoroastrian teaching a characteristic point of view on moral questions which leads to fairly practical results. That point of view is the utilitarian. The virtues which it teaches are decidedly the virtues of this world and for the sake of this world. The result is a very practical and sensible system of ethics which so far as it goes must win the assent, if not the admiration, of all who study it.

It is because of this utilitarian aim that Zoroastrianism lays such emphasis upon *purity*. Zarathustra, or his early followers, perceived the immense importance of personal purity, physical and mental, for the health and strength of the individual and for the power of the race. Hence the innumerable precautions — many of them puerile and imaginary, to be sure— prescribed in the ancient books and continued in modern practice against every kind of physical contagion. Almost equal to purity in the emphasis which it receives is charity, especially to the poorer members of the Parsee community. The Parsees are by common consent easily the most charitable natives of India. All their own poor are so well taken care of by their more fortunate brothers that there are no Parsee beggars. Besides a great deal of private giving, and many large charitable institutions of various sorts, such as hospitals, schools, etc., there exists among the Parsees an establishment for systematic charity of a sort probably nowhere paralleled until a few years ago it occurred to Mr. Rockefeller to found an institution of the same sort. I refer to the "Parsee Panchayat" and its charity fund. The Panchayat was formerly a council of elders who had the general oversight and control of the Parsee community. This council was long since dissoved, but the trustees of its moneys have become a corporation for the distribution of funds given for charitable purposes. Its capital is now between four and five million rupees, and though the trustees give away every year nearly one hundred thousand rupees, the fund is always growing, because of the constant contributions to it by Parsees rich and poor. It is the custom to mark great events of life — joyful or sad — by making contributions to this fund. Every Parsee widow or orphan who has no other means of support, in fact every indigent member of the community, is helped or altogether taken care of out of this fund, after the

trustees have first inquired into the case to see how far such assistance is really needed. And not only individuals but charitable institutions receive assistance from the Panchayat, prominent among these latter being a temporary home for wandering Parsees from abroad, and an asylum for the helpless — a sort of poor-house — whose inmates are free to do as they like except that they must obey the one rule never to beg of any one.

In characteristically utilitarian fashion, the Vendidad singles out three kinds of good deeds which are peculiarly meritorious — namely, (1) to help the poor; (2) to help a man to marry and thus enable him to live a virtuous and honorable life and bring honorable children into the world; (3) to give education to those who are in search of it. And these aims remain no dead letter with the Parsee community. Not only are they the most charitable native people of India, but probably also the best educated. Illiteracy with them is at a minimum,[1] and the higher education of women as well as of men is very common. The stranger in Bombay is not there twenty-four hours before he acquires the habit of looking about for a Parsee when in need of information. The great majority of them whom one meets in the streets can speak English, and the evidence of intelligence and education which one sees in their faces and in their bearing easily marks them out from all but the exceptional Hindus and Moslems in the city.

And their courtesy is as marked as their intelligence. Their sacred books, in fact, urge upon them to extend their kindness even to the animal kingdom and to the insentient earth. This is, however, due to no sentimentality, but to the combination of genuine humanity with a very canny eye to the main chance; — as will be seen in the following extract from the Catechism: —

"*Q.* In the Creation round about us, who draws our attention next to our fellow-men?

"*A.* All animals and living creatures. We should treat all animals with kindness.

"*Q.* What about noxious creatures or harmful animals?

[1] As has been pointed out on a previous page, their percentage of illiteracy is considerably lower than that of the Christians or of any other religious community in India.

"*A.* As for the animals or beasts of prey which harass men and harmless beasts of burden, such a state of existence should be produced for them as would not permit of their doing harm.

"*Q.* How should we act towards the beasts of burden and other animals serviceable to mankind?

"*A.* We should treat them with kindness. We should give them their proper food and nourishment. We must exact from them as much work only as lies in their power to do. We should not treat them cruelly for the sake of our bread and should not exact from them work beyond their capacity. When we do not treat them properly, they, as it were, curse us. On the other hand, if we treat them well, they bless us. . . .

"*Q.* What is meant by saying that Ahura Mazda expects us to promote the growth and development of His creation?

"*A.* The Creator of the Universe expects from us that we may so bring about the further growth of His creation as would bring about a better enjoyment of the creation and as would make the world more and more prosperous.

"*Q.* Will you give an instance?

"*A.* Yes. For instance, a man promotes the work of growth and development when he brings about the growth of two blades of corn where formerly grew only one. In this way he pleases Ahura-Mazda. Though he may have enough for himself, he must increase the growth of corn so that others can buy it cheaply and readily." [1]

A religion like this should surely win the plaudits of an age which reads history and morality and everything else from the economic point of view; and if the Parsees admitted proselytes, we might expect to see Professor Carver and his fellows who value religion by its economic fruits trooping over to Zoroastrianism as "the religion worth having." The result of this utilitarian tendency is evident among the Parsees as a community. Success in business looms very large in their eyes, and they bear the usual marks, good and bad, of a pronounced commercialism. "If it may be said that Americans are all after the mighty dollar," writes Mr. W. B. Stover, "it may yet more truthfully be said that the Parsees are all after the silver rupee. Between Bombay and Ahmedabad, and on out toward Wad-

[1] Pages 29–31.

wan, nearly all the saloon-keepers in towns, villages, and country places, are Parsees — because it pays. There is money in it. The man with money is the most respected. However, there are not a few noble exceptions to the above." [1] And I should here repeat what I have already said, that the Parsee is very generous with his money. He is a shrewd business man, but he is very seldom stingy.

The Parsee morality and religion is, in short, very sane, practical, and utilitarian. It belongs to what the German philosophers call the "*Verstand*" with very little of the "*Vernunft*" about it. After watching the professional beggars and self-tormentors of Benares, one comes upon the eminently sane Parsee with a sense of relief. But the endless repetition of this perfect sanity which one finds in the Parsee community, with so little to break the spiritual commonplace, becomes itself at last rather monotonous; and one almost longs for a ragged sannyasi again, who has dared to turn his back upon bread and butter, and, going out under the stars with staff and bowl, to risk his all in the great adventure of faith. Zoroastrianism is much too sane for this sort of thing. It despises asceticism, nor has it any place for mysticism. It has no great enthusiasms which disdain to count the cost, no missions and no self-consciousness of a mission, no irrational vistas and visions, and little poetry. There is no nonsense about it. It is prosaically sane and decidedly of this earth. But it must not be forgotten that prose has certain solid advantages and that sanity on the whole is quite as important as dreaming. And the moral qualities of the Parsee community, emanating as they do directly from the teaching of its religion, have a solidity and bulk that no one can either be blind to or deny. We must not expect all conceivable virtues to be combined in anything of this world; and whether it appeals to our individual taste or not, there is no denying that the faith and teachings of Zarathustra form a very noble religion.

There is, however, one unfortunate feature in the actual practice of the faith of the Parsees which deserves especial notice if we are to form a true estimate of it, not as a theory but as a religion. For the whole of a religion is not to be found in

[1] *India; A Problem*, p. 54.

any set of books, no matter how sacred or authoritative they be, but in the lives of the people. The unfortunate feature I have in mind is the surprising ignorance of the bulk of the Parsees as to their own religion. The Parsees as a whole are a well-educated people, as education goes in India; but their education is almost altogether secular and utilitarian and practical even in the home, and is intended to prepare the child to get on well in this world, and to furnish him with just enough of the external rites and ceremonies to pass him on into the next. His religious education is mostly of the objective sort and is apparently regarded as a sort of other-worldly life insurance. Up till quite recently almost no systematic effort was made to spread throughout the community, or to communicate to the rising generation, any intelligent attitude toward the truths and doctrines which were for Zarathustra the essential thing. A superficial formalism and externalism has been the bane of Zoroastrianism almost ever since the death of its founder. The sacred shirt and the sacred thread must be put on properly every morning, and taken off and put on again several times each day with the recitation of the proper formula; no beef or pork must ever be eaten; the sacred fire must be properly produced, fed, and protected; the priest must perform the proper ceremonies with the *haoma* plant and the urine of the bull; and all good Parsees must at last be properly devoured by vultures in the Towers of Silence; but the truths about God and morality need be known only in their most meager outlines. A practical and hard-headed race, they regard prayer and other rites quite objectively as things that must be done, and the rules of religion as laws which must be obeyed. To many of them it has never occurred that the spirit in which the prayer is said or the law obeyed is of any importance.

These ceremonies, so scrupulously observed, are, to be sure, not merely arbitrary external acts, but have always some more or less remote utilitarian purpose or some symbolic significance. In fact the Parsees, like other Orientals, carry symbolism to a point which to us Westerners often seems wearisome if not incredible. Thus the *kusti*, or sacred thread, which the Parsee must wear upon his body at all hours of the day and night, is made up of seventy-two strands, put together in six bundles of

twelve each; and each of these strands and bundles, together with the spaces between them, is symbolic of something or other, from the seventy-two chapters of the Yasna to the space between heaven and earth. The kusti symbolizes all these things; but only the learned few know it. For the rank and file it is sufficient to *wear* the kusti continually and to untie and retie it at certain stated times.

As said above, neither in the symbolism nor in the weightier matters of the Law has there been till very recently any systematic effort at instruction for the old or young. The Parsees have no weekly holy day, as have the Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans, no meeting for religious instruction, nothing corresponding to our preaching services or Sunday-School. On certain special days — perhaps six or seven times a year — a sermon will be given in one of the Fire Temples, but these occasions are of too rare occurrence and too disconnected to have any appreciable influence. The Fire Temples, indeed, are always open to the Parsee (and to him alone), and at any time he may enter and find the priests officiating before the sacred flame, the most marvelous of all the symbols of God. But as there is no special time for him to go, and as he will probably find few others there when he arrives, he goes but seldom. Some go as often as once a month, some but once a year. And indeed there seems to be little enough to bring them there. To see a priest bowing before the sacred fire is probably no very inspiring sight; and one can pray quite as well at home or out of doors.

For the priests as a class enjoy no great respect from their co-religionists. In fact most of them are looked down upon as a lazy, ignorant, and greedy lot, — and I am here using words employed by Parsee acquaintances of mine. The majority of them are unable to understand the meaning of the ancient sacred texts which they read and recite; and divine truth seems to play a much less important rôle in their thoughts than the possible size of the forthcoming fee. And in morals they are certainly not superior to others. One Parsee whom I met expressed his opinion of them by saying he would take a priest's word perhaps as readily as a carpenter's, but not more so. Moreover, it seems questionable whether they are

improving noticeably in education and worth, or whether they are even keeping pace in these things with the rest of the community. The reason for this state of things is, in my informant's opinion, to be traced largely to economic causes. The priest is assured of a living — he will not starve: but his living will be a very poor one and he can rise financially only a little way. The amount he can earn as a priest, which is entirely made up of fees and presents, is quite limited, while the Parsee layman — merchants and professional men — form the richest class in rich Bombay; and there are no sumptuary laws among the Parsees to prevent the lavish display of wealth before the faces of the poor. Moreover, the Parsee priest is not allowed to go into any business or be anything but a priest. He may not turn an honest anna by any extra labor or little venture of his own. His wife, indeed, helps out somewhat by making sacred threads, the manufacture of which is a monopoly belonging to the wives of priests. But there is no other way by which the priest's sorry little income may be increased. Now, while the Parsee priesthood is an hereditary office in the sense that only the sons of priests may enter it, there is no law forcing the son of a priest to follow in his father's profession unless he so chooses. Hence the more able and ambitious of the priest's sons, seeing what their father's life is like, go into some other profession or into business, where the great rewards of life, as measured in rupees and annas, are to be won, and only the indolent sons as a rule care to enter the priesthood. Naturally these indolent persons find much study a weariness unto the flesh, and hence only a few learn Zend and are capable of understanding the scriptures which they read. For the Parsee priest is not required to understand what he reads; the only requirement is that he should be able to make the right sounds at the right time. And as a fact the great majority of the priests are almost as ignorant of their sacred literature and of the meaning of the prayers which they recite as are the laity.

And this is saying a good deal. For though every Parsee, layman as well as cleric, learns in childhood and recites daily a number of prayers, these prayers he learns and recites in a *transliteration* (not a translation) of the original Zend. Translations of them, indeed, exist, but it is the exceptional Parsee

who takes the trouble to look them up or to teach his children the meaning of the strange syllables in a tongue long dead which he requires them to commit to memory. Probably ninety per cent of the laity, in the opinion of one of my Parsee informants, are in this condition of ignorance as to the prayers which they offer, — they know how to make the sounds but nothing more.

Some of the Parsee Theosophists (for the T. S. has Parsee as well as Hindu members) justify this repetition of meaningless syllables, as might be expected, on the ground that the Zend verses have a virtue of their own and are productive of "vibrations" in the ether, which have a powerful effect upon the nature spirits.[1] Not many of the Parsees, however, are acquainted with this "scientific" explanation, and manage to get on without any. The more intelligent, of course, regret and deplore this ignorant and superstitious kind of worship as much as any one could. One Parsee gentleman, in speaking of it, told me that he had never attended a Christian service until, in crossing the Atlantic, he found himself in a Sunday service in the cabin. "I was very much struck," he said, "by the prayers and the reading from the Bible. *They were all in English.* It made a great effect upon me, appealing to both my mind and my heart. It roused in me a longing for God such as I had never felt in any Parsee temple. And I would five times rather hear the Bible read like that than any of my own sacred books in their unknown language."

Some of the more advanced Parsees like my friend are in favor of having their sacred books translated and used in the vernacular in temple and home. They feel that if this could only be done it would work a religious revival in the community. For my own part I fear this would bring only added

[1] This I was told by a Parsee Theosophist acquaintance. The Theosophist Parsees also "preach to the less educated classes of people that there is high efficacy in offering flowers and milk and cocoanuts to the waters; they preach to the people, as an act of special religious merit, to fall prostrate before and kiss imaginary pictures of their prophet; they exhort people to make a show of penitence by a vigorous slapping of cheeks. They represent to the people that the sole efficacy of their prayers consists in the material form resultant upon the physical vibrations created by their utterances." (Quoted in Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements* from the *Journal* of the Iranian Association, for March, 1913.)

disappointment. The Parsees who have never read a translation of their sacred books naturally suppose that, being inspired, they form a very wonderful literature full of divine truth. As a matter of fact, aside from a few memorable passages, they form a most prosaic and "uninspired" mass of reading. A very large part of them is given up to matters of ceremonial purity and impurity (which, indeed, sometimes have their practical bearing on health); another large part to some very primitive myths; while the passages that deal with moral questions are mostly devoted to commonplaces and redundancies which leave one no wiser than he was before. "Virtue is the path of God; vice that of the devil. Good thoughts, good words, good deeds constitute virtue; evil thoughts, evil words, evil deeds constitute vice. Honesty, charity, and truthfulness constitute the former; dishonesty, want of charity, and falsehood constitute the latter." This is a sample of the finest sort of thing to be found in the Parsee sacred books. And doubtless what it says is all true and fine; but what has it either of instruction or of inspiration for a man in the twentieth century? How can an intelligent Parsee read it without feeling its triteness even more than its truth? And when one turns from this to the interminable discussions of ritualistic cleanliness and purification which fill the Vendidad,[1] one feels that the Parsees have suffered no great loss in having no adequate and popular translation of their sacred books. Doubtless their sacred literature was well enough adapted to the times in which it was written. But the world has grown beyond it — the Parsees along with the rest of the world; and it has no real message for them to-day except the one fundamental truth that *God is Good* — a message which in the modern worship of Monism is only too far from being trite or unnecessary.

Perhaps the most important function of the sacred books of the Parsees is to bind them to the past and to preserve for their religion the enormous force which comes from a conscious tradition. And this is a function the value of which it would be hard to overemphasize. It is this emotional force of tradition as much as anything else that marks the difference between

[1] For a translation (by West) see the *S. B. E.*, vol. III (American ed., New York, Christian Lit. Co., 1898.)

a religion and a philosophy, and enables the least spiritual individual members to draw upon the collective and cumulative spirituality of the community stored up through centuries of religious experience. And the same great function is performed by the public cult of whatever form. It is easy for us Protestant-minded Americans to minimize the importance of cult, and in fact it is often difficult for us to realize its value both as a link with the past and as an expression of the communal religious life. Most of us need to learn greater respect for worship and tradition wherever they are met with. It is in this light that we should view the religious customs of the Parsees, foremost among which is their ancient Fire Ceremony. The Parsees are sometimes spoken of as "fire-worshipers." This, of course, is an ignorant calumny. Parsees are no more fire worshipers than Christians are bread and wine worshipers. Every religion has felt the need of some external act which all could perform or could see performed as an expression of the common faith or purpose or emotion. And Zoroastrianism, as far back as the days of its great founder, chose as its chief symbolic act the public and perpetual reverence for that most brilliant and mysterious element of God's creation, Fire. "We look to fire," says the Parsee Catechism, "with reverential feelings as the manifested form of the power of heat and light permeating this world, and also as the symbol of the splendor and glory of the Creator. Then, in the case of the sacred fire of the fire temples, the religious ritual in its consecration adds some elements of moral thoughts." What these moral thoughts may be in the case of the more intelligent and spiritual members of the community who look behind the external act to its symbolic meaning, is suggested by the following passage from Mr. Modi's "Religious System of the Parsees": —

"When a Parsee goes before the sacred fire, which is kept all day and all night burning in the fire temple, the officiating priest presents him the ashes of a part of the consumed fire. The Parsee applies it to his forehead just as a Christian applies the consecrated water in his Church, and thinks to himself: 'Dust to dust. The fire, all brilliant and shining and resplendent, has spread the fragrance of the sweet-smelling sandalwood and frankincense roundabout, but is at last reduced to

dust. So it is destined for me. After all, I am to be reduced to dust and have to depart from this transient life. Let me do my best to spread, like this fire, before my death, the fragrance of charity and good deeds and lead the life of righteousness and knowledge before others."

For I would not leave the impression that the Parsees *merely* perform external ceremonies with *no* understanding of their meaning and *no* religious sentiment in the performance. There are many, many intelligent men and women among them by whom the value of external rites is understood as well as it is by intelligent Christians. And even among the most ignorant members of the community, the religious customs so loyally adhered to probably have in many cases some very real spiritual and moral effect. The man who pauses five times a day to turn his thoughts toward God and to reaffirm to himself the value and importance of "good thoughts, good words, good deeds," even though at the same time he recite a list of meaningless syllables, can hardly fail to find his life in some wise influenced by the practice. And of course even the most ignorant Parsees, though quite unable to translate or paraphrase the prayers which they recite, do know in a dumb sort of way what they are about; and sometimes, though by no means always, they doubtless accompany the words they say with a really prayerful state of mind. What prayer means to the more intelligent may be gathered from the following quotation: "All Parsee prayers begin with a resolve to do acts that will please Almighty God. The resolve is followed by an expression of regret for past evil thoughts, words, or deeds. A Parsee in beginning his prayers repents his errors and says, 'O Omniscient Lord, I repent of all my sins; I repent of all evil thoughts that I may have entertained in my mind, of all the evil words that I may have spoken, of all the evil actions that I may have committed; O Omniscient Lord, I repent of all the faults that may have originated with me, whether they refer to thoughts, words, or deeds, whether they appertain to my body or my soul, whether they be in connection with the material or with the spiritual world.'" [1]

I said above that no one could see the Parsees at prayer and

[1] J. J. Modi, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

not feel that there was a good deal of real devotion mingled with their formalism. And whoever wills may judge for himself by going any evening in the year to the western waterfront of Bombay. The Parsee may pray anywhere, but he prays best in the presence of some form of fire, the supreme symbol to him of the Eternal God. And especially when the sun sets over the sea the Parsee feels impelled to turn his face toward the great luminary and his heart toward its great Creator. And so every evening, an hour or more before sunset, they begin to gather on the beach in Bombay, facing the setting sun, and from that time till dusk there is a continual procession of them, going and coming, all silent and quite informal, worshiping together and yet each alone. On feast days there are thousands lining the shore, and every day the number mounts up into the hundreds. Some stay but five or ten minutes, some half an hour or more. Each one first dips his hands into the sea, if the tide be full, — or if at ebb tide, then into some little pool of salt water, — and touches his forehead with it. After this ceremonial washing he takes his stand facing the west, unties his sacred thread, snaps it out to full length, and usually touches his forehead with it or fingers it as if it were a rosary. Then he replaces it, tying it properly about him, and recites the proper prayers in the Zend language. This much all do, and the less devout, having done this, return homeward, or stay and gossip with their friends. But the more devout — and these are many — continue their prayers beyond this minimum, either reading additional prayers from a prayer-book (in transliteration) or making spontaneous prayers of their own — or probably both. One old gentleman whom I have seen more than once on the Bombay beach seemed to combine in a striking way (for I watched him closely) both the formalism and the spirituality of his religion — a combination which is often so genuine in the East, and which an Anglo-Saxon Protestant often finds it so difficult to understand or even respect. After going through, most scrupulously, all the forms just described, this man stood for perhaps fifteen minutes, with head thrown back, gazing at the yellow glow of the evening sun— a glow that comes in the tropics only some time after the sun has disappeared. His lips did not move and he did not seem

to be reciting any prayer, but his face had an expression of devotion and exaltation such as one sees in old Italian paintings of the saints. Sometimes he put his hands together in the common Christian attitude for prayer (an attitude common to all Orientals), but generally he was quite still, except for a slight involuntary swaying of the body. At the end of his prayer — or meditation — he bowed down three times to the west, then to the south, to the east, to the north, and again to the west, touching his head to the ground in each case. Then going to a pool of salt water he dipped his hands in it, as at the beginning of his prayer, and touched his forehead. This he did five times, turning completely around each time. Finally, he took out an envelope filled with small flowers, emptied it into the little pool, and turned homeward through the dusk.

There is something about this daily out-of-door prayer-meeting of the Parsees — silent, informal, collective yet individual — which is very nearly unique. The dome of the eternal heavens is the cathedral, the setting sun acts as altar, and the golden orange of the tropical evening sky, bending over the endless reaches of the Indian Ocean, lends a framework of suggestiveness which can hardly fail of its influence on either Parsee or Christian.

The combination of individualism and communal life exhibited in this prayer-meeting is typical of the whole Zoroastrian religion. As each Parsee says his prayers by and for himself, with no officiating priest for him to follow, so in his faith and life he is responsible to God alone and not answerable for his views to any ecclesiastical authority. The Parsees have no heresy trials. Yet, on the other hand, their social consciousness is exceedingly strong, and they prize their racial unity and separateness so highly that it has resulted in the erection of a wall between them and all others which none are allowed to scale. This is one of the most striking things about the Parsees. Persuaded as they are that theirs is the best religion in the world, they not only do nothing to spread it, sharing none of the proselyting zeal so notable in Christians and Mohammedans, but they simply will not permit of any proselyting on the part of any of their number. No one born out of the Parsee fold can ever be allowed to enter it, no matter how firmly he

believes in Zarathustra and all his teachings, no matter how ardently he longs to worship before the sacred fire, no matter how conscientiously he practices *humata, hukhta, hvarshta.* The *sudrah* and *kusti* — the sacred shirt and thread — are not for him: he can never be admitted within the fire temples, and when he dies he cannot be granted the privilege of having his flesh devoured by vultures and his bones reduced to dust in the well of the Tower of Silence. A notable instance of this exclusiveness occurred not long ago when a very wealthy and influential Parsee, who resided part of the year in Paris, converted his French wife to the Zoroastrian faith, invested her with the sacred thread and shirt, and applied for her recognition as a Parsee and her admission into the Fire Temple at Bombay. The question became an issue for the whole Parsee community, and was finally tried (odd as it may seem to us Westerners) before the Government court of justice. The court decided that there was no precedent of a non-Parsee becoming one through conversion or marriage, and that therefore the lady in question had no right to be admitted to the fire temples or to consider herself a Parsee. Proselytism, in short, is simply impossible.

The ground taken by the conservatives in this matter is that the whole question should be regarded as social rather than religious. If the Parsees should let down the bars and admit outsiders, the French wives admitted would form a very small proportion of the proselytes. Neither would there be many Brahmins nor other desirable members of the Indian community among those found knocking at their gates. The overwhelming majority of those admitted would be low-caste Hindus. And these would greatly lower the standard of the Parsee community and destroy its individuality. The Parsees are a very successful and ambitious people, and notably proud of their success, and they have no taste for the highways and hedges. They want none of their number to be poor and lowly; and they prefer that the poor and lowly should not be of their number. Moreover, it must be remembered that they occupy a very anomalous position. Their great founder gave his entire life to the work of proselytism, and so long as they had a land of their own they were not averse to making converts: but

since their migration to India they have been but a handful in the midst of the heathen (as they regard their idolatrous neighbors), and it is only since then that they have adopted this seemingly strange rule against spreading their religion. And indeed it is easy to see what would, in all probability, have been the result had they not drawn the line very strictly around their little community on entering the land. They would have been simply absorbed into the great, amorphous body of Hinduism which surrounds them on every side, and which has sucked out from so many independent movements all that was distinctive in them. So the Parsee community would have become merely one of the innumerable Hindu castes or sects, and Zarathustra would simply have been added, as one more god, to the thirty-three million deities that the Indians have already.

It is encouraging to note that this determination of long standing to keep pure the blood is being paralleled to-day by a new and growing desire to disseminate a deeper knowledge of the religion which is their bond of union and their great distinction. As I have shown above, there always has been and there is still far too little effort made to teach the children more than the merest outlines of the religion. And all the more intelligent Parsees have come to recognize with regret both this lack of religious education, the accretion of various Hindu superstitions and undesirable customs, and in general the degenerate condition into which their religion has been lapsing for many centuries. As long ago as 1851 a Religious Reform Association was founded whose aim was "the regeneration of the social condition of the Parsees and the restoration of the Zoroastrian religion to its pristine purity." Ten years later a movement was set on foot for the advancement of Avesta scholarship and the higher education of Parsee priests. These movements and others like them have had some influence, and a yearly conference is now held to discuss various questions of religious, social, and educational reform.[1] About ten years ago a systematic effort at religious education was begun. A commission was appointed to prepare five books for religious in-

[1] For the facts just cited I am indebted to Farquhar's *Modern Religious Movements* (see pp. 84–89, and also 345).

struction in the vernacular. These books were soon completed and authorized, one of them being the Catechism from the English edition of which I have so often quoted. These books are now used by many parents in the instruction of their children, and in most Parsee schools a special hour is given up to their study.

In the face of these various reform movements the conservatives, of course, have not been idle. Like the conservative Hindus, they have identified everything old with the national and community cause, and under the leadership of their Theosophist members have resisted with considerable success the advance of the reformers. In spite of their efforts, however, modern ideas are gradually permeating the community, and the change from the old to the new is going on rapidly enough to keep the religion in touch with life, and slowly enough to insure the necessary continuity with the past. The more educated and liberal Parsees see in the old forms and ceremonies only customs which in past time were useful, but most of which must undergo gradual modification or be outgrown altogether. The great fundamental beliefs, such as the theistic doctrine and the hope of the endless life, they regard as having eternal value, and a few of the ancient forms, such as that of revering God through His element of fire as a symbol, will, in their opinion, always be found useful for the Parsee community and will never be outgrown. The more irrational customs and the more materialistic beliefs will be outgrown. But the wiser liberals can wait with patience for their departure, knowing that everything cannot happen at once, and that all healthy change in an organism like religion must be a process of growth, not of revolution.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BUDDHISTS OF BURMA AND CEYLON

FROM the far northwest on the borders of Afghanistan, to Orissa and Madras in the east and south, India is covered with caves, rock-cut temples, columns, statues, carvings that come from a religion now long since perished from the land. It is over a thousand years since Buddhism died out of the country of its birth. The museum for it has been substituted for the temple, and the archeologist and Pali scholar have taken the place of the yellow-robed monk and the devout lay follower of the Blessed One. Yet so great an impression has the Buddha made upon his land and upon the minds of all students of Indian religion that the spell of his personality still hangs over those regions where he lived and taught, and most of us can visit only with a very deep and genuine reverence those few well-authenticated spots where we know his "lotus feet" once trod. Most sacred, and at the same time most well authenticated and most beautiful, of all these spots is Buddh Gaya. Its great temple, to be sure, has been rebuilt and considerably changed since ancient times by the Nepalese, and the place as a whole is in the hands of the Hindus. Yet with native reverence for all that others revere, its guardians both respect and honor the temple; and it is surrounded by a garden in which all manner of fresh flowers clamber over all manner of half-ruined statues and ancient stupas, so that the whole forms a combination of loving care and picturesque decay unsurpassed in loveliness and beauty by anything in India. And over the whole place rests the spirit of the Teacher; so that I for one was not ashamed to follow the little band of Nepalese and Thibetan pilgrims in their circumambulation of the great tower and to pause and do a little puja of my own under the Bo tree which marks the spot where illumination came to him who was to be the "Light of Asia."

In fact I am sure that if the Buddha could have returned and watched us that morning, he would have preferred my

homage to that of the Himalayan pilgrims who bore his name. He who came to destroy belief in the efficacy of outer forms could have marked only with deep disappointment and sorrow the fastening of gold leaf upon the temple's stones in his name, the mumbling of mystic texts and the swinging of prayer wheels, which were the principal occupations of these pilgrims. And if he could have followed them back to their mountain homes he would probably have exclaimed that the time was ripe for a new Buddha to appear on earth, for scarcely a token of his teaching would he have found.

It was not my good fortune to follow these pilgrims any farther toward their Thibetan homes than Darjeeling; but in and around Darjeeling one can get a very good idea of Thibetan and Nepalese Buddhism. Halfway down the slope between Darjeeling and the valley on the east is a Buddhist temple of the Thibetan type. On the outer wall, on each side of the entrance, is a line of five or six "prayer wheels" or prayer cylinders, each about two feet high and covered with sacred texts. The recitation of these texts or mantras is supposed to keep off the evil spirits which abound wherever the Lamaistic type of Buddhism is known, and the spinning of one of these cylinders produces the same miraculous result. One can set all twelve revolving at once — and the effect on the spirit world is presumably considerable. In the porch of the temple is another prayer wheel, much larger and apparently much more important and *official* than those without. It is six feet high and bears several rows of inscribed texts. The axis of the cylinder is continued by an iron rod on which it rests, and this before reaching the floor is bent outward and then back in such a fashion that by pulling a rope attached to the bend the cylinder can be easily revolved. On the top of the cylinder is an iron projection so placed that in each revolution it will hit against two bells suspended from the ceiling directly above the cylinder. When we entered the temple — and in fact throughout our visit — a boy, seated on the floor in front of the cylinder, was occupied pulling the rope and thus revolving the wheel. Apparently he was praying for the whole community — and by the hour. Thus do the Northern Buddhists "pray without ceasing."

At the farther end of the inner room of the temple were three seated Buddhas, with a row of various kinds of offerings before them. The central one of these images represented "the great Buddha" — which is not Gautama but Gautama's heavenly essence, of which the historical Gautama was only an appearance. Gautama himself was represented by the humbler figure on the left; while to the right was Gautama's reflex or Bodhisattva. For Himalayan Buddhism has not only made the Buddha into a god; it has been unsatisfied with this and has invented some twenty-eight Buddhas, made each of these into a Trinity, and deified all the members of each. Quite consistently it has also transformed its monks into priests and endowed them with all manner of powers, and in place of simple contemplation of the Blessed One and his Doctrine, it has invented magical mantras by means of which one may avoid the hordes of dangerous devils to which reference has already been made. One may use these formulæ in various ways — repeat them, write them out on a prayer wheel and revolve it, wear them in a little case and carry it suspended round the neck, swallow them, or reflect them in a mirror, wash the mirror, and drink the water it was washed in,[1] etc., etc. The favorite of these charms is the famous "*Om! mani padmi, hum!*" — which means (so far as it means anything) "Om! the Jewel of the Lotus Flower! Hum!" In all the region round Darjeeling one meets women and men wandering through village streets or along country roads, fingering their rosaries of one hundred and eight beads and murmuring, "*Om meni pemi hum!*" Little hand prayer wheels are almost as common as rosaries — brass cylinders containing texts and revolved on a stick. I watched carefully two women in the streets of Darjeeling, one of whom was revolving a prayer wheel of this description. Much of the time she was talking eagerly with her

[1] Methods of this sort are not confined to Thibet. In southern and central Italy, including Rome, pictures of the Virgin printed on very thin tissue paper may be procured, which are useful in curing headaches and other slight ailments. The method of application is quite Thibetan: the paper is soaked in a glass of water till it has in part gone to pieces, and then the water with the fragments of paper is swallowed. The use of these miraculous papers is not confined to the lower classes, but is to be met with in some of the best families.

companion and when not talking she was looking into the shops that they passed; but all the time she kept the wheel going. Occasionally they would enter some shop and inquire prices and haggle over bargains with the shopkeeper; but the wheel never stopped. Finally, having completed her morning devotions, she handed the wheel to her friend, who then took her turn at it. I could see no sign of what we should call real prayer or devotion in either of them or in any of the Himalayan Buddhists whom I met. Buddhism to them (so far as I could judge on a very superficial acquaintance) seemed to be merely a way of acquiring supernatural "merit" by external mechanical devices.

Far different is the impression which one gets on his first superficial acquaintance with Burmese and Ceylonese Buddhism. And the contrast between it and the lower forms of Hinduism is quite as marked. When the traveler turns his back upon India and steams up the Rangoon River, he finds great forests and green fields about him instead of the parched and dusty plains to which he has become accustomed; and when he lands and begins to watch the Burmese people at their devotions he feels that spiritually as well as physically he is in a new land and is breathing a new atmosphere. In place of the closed temple with its mysterious inner shrine, its lingam and Ganesh, its continual wash of dirty water, and its fat priest keeping out all but Hindus and extorting unwilling money from poor pilgrims, — instead of this one finds the white or golden pagoda, open on all sides to the sky, accessible to every one (with or without shoes), and guarded by no priest; and instead of the lingam or the hideous Hanuman, the dignified image of the calm Buddha. I think that travel has few experiences to give in any part of the world more striking and memorable than one's first impression of the Shway Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon. The pagoda stands upon a lofty artificial mound, and mound and pagoda together are as high as St. Paul's in London. There are approaches to the pagoda at each of the four points of the compass, — long and gentle stairways climbing by an easy ascent from the foot to the top of the mound, between continuous lines of booths where good-natured Burmese and pretty Burmese girls, in silks of many a hue and

all smoking long cheroots, stand waiting to sell you candles or gongs or incense or paper flags or flowers of varied kinds and colors for your use in paying homage to the memory of the Master to whose glory the pagoda was erected. When you emerge from this sacred bazaar at the top of the steps, you find yourself on a platform in the midst of which rises the great pagoda, quite covered with gold leaf and gleaming in the sun, and surrounded by a forest of smaller pagodas and shrines of varied forms, each containing a statue of the Buddha and a profusion of tropical flowers, while palm trees wave their stately branches overhead against the blue Burmese sky, and thousands of little tinkly bells that circle the pagoda tops quiver in endless chorus as the soft breeze touches them with its unfailing caress. In every corner of the great platform and before each shrine are worshipers — here one or two, there a family or a little group — kneeling in prayer and presenting offerings of flowers and of lighted candles before some image of the founder of their faith. No priests, no supervision, no fees, no concerted and systematized worship. Here, you feel, is the religion of the individual. And though you may miss the communion of saints and the congregational singing, you can hardly go away from the pagoda without recognizing that you have been in an unmistakably religious atmosphere.

What is true of the Shway Dagon will hold for thousands of pagodas small and large in various parts of Burma, — for the great Shway Maw Daw at Pegu, the sacred Arackan Pagoda at Mandalay, the Shway San Daw at Prome (most beautiful of all Burmese buildings), and for many a small pagoda quite unknown to fame on the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy. Everywhere the same unmistakable reverence to the memory of the Buddha, the same direct, individual expression of devotion with no mediating priest, the same obvious gain of courage and poise and peace as a result of the prayer.

When one first visits a Burmese pagoda — especially if he has been reading Fielding Hall — he is likely to see only the beauty of the worship and to come away with unmixed admiration for the Burmese and their religion. A better acquaintance with their worship, however, will make one more critical. There is a great deal of externalism in their religion. I do not

agree with the missionary who told me it was *all* external; but it is quite possible that if I knew as much about the matter as she does I might agree with her. But though I believe that there is more than mere externalism in the worship of the Burmese, there can be no doubt that a large part of it is merely that. Many Buddhists themselves have told me this. The "prayers" said at the pagodas are mostly formulæ learned by heart, some in Burmese, some in Pali, and the Pali ones are often quite meaningless to the worshiper. Moreover, the mental attitude of the worshiper is sometimes very close to idolatry. A Buddhist layman told me that in his opinion a large number of the ignorant people really worshiped the stone image before them; and one intelligent young man assured me that many Buddhists prayed to the pagoda itself — that he had always done so as a boy and that his mother did so still. Yet for all this, Buddhist worship in Burma never loses its simplicity and beauty, its dignity and reverence. I remember a group of a dozen nuns, kneeling before the great image in the Arackan Pagoda at Mandalay. All of them had shaven heads, some of them were old and some infirm. They had come apparently from the convent across the river to lay their little offerings of flowers before the feet of the Blessed One and to acquire what merit they might by the repetition of various verses in this most sacred shrine. They may not have understood the words they used, and for aught I know they regarded the ancient image before them as having some miraculous power of its own. Only they could tell. But there was no mistaking the devotion and reverence that was in their hearts and that shone from their faces.

The most important and commonly repeated of the "prayers" or formulæ of praise used by Buddhists is the "Refuge," which, of course, is always repeated in Pali. Its meaning is as follows: —

I take refuge in the Buddha.
I take refuge in the Law.
I take refuge in the Order.
A second time I take refuge in the Buddha.
A second time I take refuge in the Law.
A second time I take refuge in the Order.
A third time I take refuge in the Buddha.
A third time I take refuge in the Law.
A third time I take refuge in the Order.

The Ten Moral Precepts are also learned by all and often recited; as are also the list of the thirty-two parts of the body, — both these in Pali. Besides these there are several other prayers which are more or less popular and are often repeated at the pagodas. One of the commonest of them is the following: —

"Awgatha, Awgatha, I worship with the body, with the mouth, and with the mind, with these three 'kans.' The first, the second, the third; once, twice, until three times. The Lord, the precious one; the Law, the precious one; the Assembly, the precious one — these three precious things. I, the worshiper, most humbly, with fervid zeal, with clasped hands, pay reverence, give offerings, and with pious gaze bow me down. Thus by this worshiping I gain merit and increase in earnestness and purity of heart, and am freed from the Four States of Punishment; from the Three Evil Things, starvation, plague, and warfare; from the Eight Chambers of Hell; and from the Five Enemies. And at the end, when the last existence has come for me, may I pass into Nirvana." [1]

But it is not only at the pagoda that the people worship. In almost every home there is a little shrine — a picture or an image of the Buddha, and below it a shelf on which simple offerings are daily placed. The image may be of stone and rudely carved or of solid gold and carefully executed. The pictures present favorite scenes in the life of Gautama, and may be bought at the pagodas or obtained *gratis* from the Mellin's Food Company with an advertisement thrown in. Flowers are kept before the image or picture, and in one house I remember finding on the shelf that served as a shrine two bowls of rice, two bowls of water, two saucers with two bananas on each, and two jars of preserved flowers. Fresh offerings are brought every morning, and in the more devout homes verses are recited before the Buddha morning and night.

But the Buddha has to share the Burman's worship with the "nats." The nats, in fact, would insist that this is only just, for compared with them the Buddha is a newcomer in the land. They were the gods of Burma long before Gautama

[1] Shway Yoe (J. G. Scott), *The Burman: His Life and Notions* (London, Macmillan & Co., 1882), vol. I, p. 223.

attained to Buddhahood — being in fact the ancient nature spirits who with their cousins ruled all the world before the rise of the "historical" religions. The Burman loves the Buddha, but fears the nats. The Buddha he knows will never harm him, and they may. Hence pragmatically considered the nats are quite as important as the Buddha. Mr. Scott (who knows the people as few others do) writes in his "Handbook of Burma": "A Burmese gives alms to the monks, worships at the pagodas on the appointed days, and repeats the doxologies which he has learnt at school, but he governs his life and actions by a consideration of what the spirits of the air, the forests, the streams, the village, or the house may do if they are not propitiated. . . . In his everyday life, from the day of his birth to his marriage, to his old age, even to the point of death, all the prominent rites and forms are to be traced, not to the [Buddhist] Baskets of the Law, but to the traditionary whims and fancies handed down from admittedly Shamanistic forefathers. If misfortunes fall upon him he makes offerings to the evil nats, who, he thinks, have brought it upon him. When he wants to build a house, launch a boat, plow or sow his fields, start on a journey, make a purchase, marry a wife himself or marry his daughter to another, bury a relative, or even endow a religious foundation, it is the spirits he propitiates, it is the nats whom he consults. His Pali prayers and invocations, lauds and doxologies, avail him nothing then, and are not even thought of."

The nats are innumerable and are ranged in a hierarchy from Thagya Min, the King Nat (the Vedic Indra), down to the nat of the meanest house. Every village has its altar to the nats, and they are worshiped both in the homes and at the pagodas.[1] These statements, of course, hold only for the less intelligent Burmese, but in matters of superstition nearly all the laymen and the majority of the monks come under this

[1] A well-informed Burmese Buddhist writes of his more ignorant fellow-countrymen: "They look upon Thagyamin as the *deus ex machina* in human affairs, and in time of distress they are ready to invoke the aid of Paya [the Adi-Buddha or Supreme Buddha of Northern Buddhism] and of Thagya. The common expression used is, 'Paya-thagya-ke-ba,' 'May Adi Buddha and Indra save me!'" (Reported by Mr. Saunders in the *Burma Critic*, February 19, 1914.)

heading. By questioning the monks on this subject one gets an interesting variety of opinions. Some believe in the nats as thoroughly as the laymen; a few deny their existence altogether; and one monk told me that the nats were of two classes: those superior to men, advanced beings on the road to Nirvana; and evil spirits lower than man who do not really exist and whom only the less intelligent believe in.

It would be very misleading to give even a superficial account of the religion of the Burmese layman and say nothing of its moral teaching and influence. One of the first things — one of the few things — which the average Burmese boy is taught by his Buddhist instructors is the moral law of the Great Teacher — the Five Precepts. These are: (1) Not to take any life; (2) not to steal; (3) to avoid sexual incontinence; (4) not to lie, deceive, or slander; (5) not to drink intoxicating liquors. There can be no doubt that these Precepts have a very real influence on the life of the Buddhists. Even the most casual visitor must be struck with the very decided admiration that all the European residents have for the Burmese. As every one knows, European residents in the East are not given to magnifying the virtues of the natives; and in most Oriental lands the foreign resident — especially the business man — sees little good in the "heathen blacks." Hence it speaks well for the Burman that almost all Europeans in the land have a good word — and usually an enthusiastic word — for him. Every one will tell you that the Burmese are reliable and hospitable and that they live up fairly well to the chief moral commands of their religion. There is little drunkenness among them and that little is vigorously opposed by the more devoted Buddhists. As a people they are peaceable and honest and very kind, — kind to each other, to the stranger, and to the whole sentient world. Cruelty to animals seems to the Burmese Buddhist peculiarly abhorrent. And little acts of mercy and thoughtfulness — such as building a booth in a village street and keeping it supplied with a jug of fresh drinking-water for the benefit of travelers — are very often met with.

To be sure these acts of kindness, while prompted largely by native goodness of heart and by the example and teachings of the Buddha, are not merely altruistic in motive. The Burman

wishes well to others, but he also has his eye on his next incarnation, and he knows that these acts pile up "merit" for him in a place where moth and rust do not corrupt nor thieves break through and steal. This term "merit" means to the Buddhist the obtaining of material benefits (in this or the next life), the laying-up of a good character, and "the satisfaction of a good conscience"![1] Which of these three shall receive the most emphasis will, of course, depend upon the individual. In each case, however, merit is conceived as something which may be acquired (in greater or less quantity), and deposited for use in another life. The prevalence of this view is largely due to that most popular of Buddhist books, the Jatakas.

Good acts, then, are a kind of insurance premium, the policy being payable in the next life. And while good acts pay well, nothing is quite so profitable as the building or gilding of a pagoda. One who has never been in Burma can with difficulty form any conception of the extent to which pagoda building has been carried and still is carried in that surprising land. As one travels on the railway, sails up the Irrawaddy, or walks along a country road, he is ever coming upon pagodas — some enormous, some tiny, some old and crumbling, surrendering their bell-shaped form as they lapse back into the plain or lose themselves in the wild growth of the jungle, some finished but yesterday and not yet gilded. At Pagan on the Irrawaddy there are upwards of ten thousand of them — and nearly all deserted. As more merit accrues through building a new pagoda than through restoring an old one (unless the old one be peculiarly sacred), the process of filling the land with more and more pagodas continues at a startling rate. Most of the smaller pagodas are built by individuals, while the larger ones are put up — or if old are regilded — by public subscription. At present a rather unusual wave of pagoda enthusiasm is passing over Burma. Nearly all the great pagodas of the land are being regilded, and at Mandalay, the religious center, the entire hill that commands the town is being covered with statues, pagodas, and other religious buildings. One of these pagodas is

[1] Saunder's Questionnaire, in the Appendix to his *Buddhist Ideals*, (Madras, Christian Literature Society, 1912).

being built for the reception of the ashes of the Buddha recently found by Dr. Spooner near Peshawar; and as I have said, the entire hill is being covered with pagodas of various sizes, shaded stairways and passages for the accommodation of pilgrims, rest-halls, and mammoth Buddha images. The whole work is in the hands of a rather remarkable monk named U Khanthi, and known as "the Hermit of Mandalay Hill." All the funds for the new pagoda and the adornment of the hill go into his hands and are expended at his discretion, no one for a moment doubting his honesty or questioning his good taste and ability. He is a man of forty or fifty with a fine face and a quiet and commanding manner. We went to see him while in Mandalay and found him in the great hall at the top of the hill where he receives visitors. He greeted us most cordially, and we had a short interview which was broken into by the arrival of a band of pilgrims from the Shan States on the borders of China. The hermit made his apologies to us and seated himself upon what might be called his official mat in front of a blue curtain in the center of the hall, while the Shans, in their strange costumes, squatted reverently before him. He first read to them a few lines from a sacred text and then all the pilgrims handed up to him, for his signature, certificates showing that they had visited Mandalay Hill and seen its famous hermit. Nearly all these Shans, we were told, "owned" pagodas of their own at home, and they had come here to acquire merit by the pilgrimage and by the offerings for the hermit and his pious work. The offerings were now brought forth from great bags, and were piled high on the trays, provided by the hermit's servants, — rice, fruits, candles, cheroots black and white, and other worldly and religious dainties. These were for the hermit's own consumption (or for his personal charity if he preferred to give them away), and were but the beginning of the merit-acquisition; for now followed the real business of the day. Other trays were brought out by the servants, and these the pilgrims loaded with silver coins, the total contribution aggregating several hundred rupees. This money, of course, was for the hermit to use in his buildings on the hill. The audience ended with a rain-making ceremony. A woman poured water, under the hermit's direc-

tions, into several bowls while he repeated texts. This process, two of his disciples told us, if carried out carefully by the Shans on their return home would enable them to get a shower whenever needed.

This Shan delegation was interesting to me as indicating some of the strange constituents that go to make up the Buddhism of the modern Burman. And, as the reader will have seen from the above description, the superstitious side of modern Buddhism is not confined to the laity. Most of the monks are quite as superstitious as the laymen. They have, of course, a wider knowledge of Buddhism, but their Buddhistic learning consists as a rule in committing to memory certain of the sacred texts; and they have little idea and apparently little care as to what the real meaning of these texts may be. Thus two disciples of the Mandalay hermit told me that Buddha was in Nirvana and entirely uninfluenced by prayers and offerings, and immediately after added that Buddha was their God, that He heard and answered prayers, and was influenced and pleased by the offerings that were given Him. I could not make them see their inconsistency, and it was evident that they had never done any thinking on the present status of Buddha and very little on any other subject connected with their religion. I was told that there were not five monks in Rangoon who could answer the questions I asked, and I am sure that a large number of those I talked with would infallibly have "flunked" the examination I give my college students on the teachings of the Buddha. Of course not all the Buddhist monks are so ignorant. In Mandalay especially there are many very learned and intelligent *pongyis* [1] who are deep students of the Pali books and real thinkers as to their meaning. But on the whole the contrast between the Indians and the Burmese in learning and intelligence is very striking. In India philosophical knowledge and real thought are not uncommonly met with; in Burma they are very rare.

The life of the monks is, on the whole, rather pleasant. They live together, in smaller or larger groups, in monastery buildings which are always comfortable, airy, and picturesque, and sometimes very beautiful. The larger monasteries in Rangoon

[1] Monks who have passed ten years in the order.

and especially in Mandalay are genuine works of art. They are built of teak-wood, elaborately carved, and the interior is in part painted a rich red, in part gilded. In each of these monasteries there is a number of small sleeping-rooms and one large central hall with its marble or alabaster or brass image of the Buddha, and its invariable accompaniment of candles and fresh flowers. There are also sleeping-mats for the monks, a library of printed books and manuscripts and beautifully executed lacquer texts, and many votive offerings in the form of banners and Buddhas, seated, recumbent, and standing. It is in this hall that visitors are received, the younger monks instructed by the abbot, and the morning and evening worship performed in honor of the Blessed One. The number of the monks in a monastery varies considerably. In the smaller ones there may be only two or three, while in the Masoyein Taik or group of monasteries (at Mandalay) there are altogether about three hundred and fifty pongyis and a number of novices. Nearly all Buddhist boys in Burma go for at least part of their education to the monastery school, and most of them at some period of their life become novices and put on the yellow robe for a short time. If a young man decides to become a monk and join the order permanently, he is admitted at the age of twenty, after passing an examination and going through a certain ceremony. A monk who has served for ten years has the title of pongyi and the right to preside as abbot at a monastery of his own.

On entering the order the monk takes, in addition to the five vows of the layman, the following five: (6) Not to eat any solid food after midday; (7) to abstain from dancing, singing, plays, and all worldly and distracting amusements; (8) to abstain from the use of ornaments and perfumes and all that tends to vanity; (9) to abandon the use of high and luxurious beds and seats and to sleep on a hard low couch; (10) to possess no money, but live always in voluntary poverty.

The monks rise in the morning about five-thirty, and after their toilet the whole monastery assembles before the image of the Buddha, where they bow and pledge afresh to keep the vows that day. The pupils and novices now sweep out the monastery, fetch water, etc., while the younger monks gather

flowers and offer them before the Buddha, and the older ones (the pongyis proper) meditate. After a very slight breakfast the boys repeat their lessons, and then they all start out with begging-bowls through the streets to collect the food for their one genuine meal. In every Burmese village one comes upon this line of yellow-robed figures early in the morning hours, marching silently through the streets in Indian file, a monk at the head followed by a line of diminutive boys each carrying an enormous black lacquer bowl. Arrived in front of the house of some layman whose generosity and desire for merit is well known, the line halts and silently waits until the lady of the house or a servant comes out and empties a quantity of steaming rice into the big bowl and pours some curry into one of the smaller dishes carried in the bowl above the rice. The monk meanwhile looks in the other direction and tries to appear unconscious. The donation offered, the line moves on. In some of the larger monasteries the abbot does not accompany the others in their begging expedition, but spends this hour in reading or instructing some of the older monks. By eleven the boys and the younger monks have returned from their excursion with well-filled bowls; the rice is then put together, a dish of it and the best of the curry is sent to the abbot, and they all have a solid meal — which in all conscience they need, as they are to have no more for the whole day. After this the monks wash out their bowls, intone praises to the Buddha, and all have a good nap, while the boys study their lessons. After nap time the lessons are heard and some of the monks read and meditate, and at four o'clock all are free to go to some pagoda or spend their time as they like. At six they are back again in the monastery, the boys and novices repeat what they have learned during the day, and the evening devotions begin. These consist in what may be called a "general confession," namely, the recitation of a formula which amounts to the prayer, "If I have sinned this day may I be forgiven!" Other formulæ of prayers are recited before the Buddha image, the abbot preaches a short sermon, the monks bow three times before him and before the Buddha, and the day is done.

The meditation of the monks to which reference has been made above has as its aim the control of the passions and the

cultivation of kindness. The monk should tell over upon his beads the thirty-two constituents of the body or the nine exits and excrements of the body, and should thereby remind himself of the transitoriness of life and the disgusting nature of bodily enjoyments.[1] He should also seek to cultivate goodwill to every living being that his eyes light upon. If, for instance, he sees a sick dog, he should say to himself, not "How disgusting!" but rather, "What can I do to help this poor creature?" Twice a month the monks assemble to hear read the Pati Mokha, or two hundred and twenty-seven rules of the order, after which they are supposed to confess any breach of the rules they may have committed since the last reading. In addition to these efforts for their own advance in righteousness, some of the monks endeavor to help the laymen also. If invited they will go to some home and teach; and twice a month (at new and full moon) they read the Law to any who care to hear. On the whole, the monks lead a fairly moral life. Fielding Hall, who has had thirty years' experience in Burma as a magistrate, testifies that he has known of only five criminal cases with which a monk was connected, and three of these were cases of rebellion. The laity honor them and their influence is mildly helpful, though hardly so superlatively ideal as readers of Fielding Hall might suppose. Harmless they are; and they would injure no one willingly, not even a spider. Yet I was told that exceeding few of them would go far out of their way to save a little girl from a life of shame. That is her own lookout, they would say. They lead "the simple life," but hardly the "strenuous" one. I asked a particularly intelligent monk in Mandalay why he had chosen to be a pongyi and his answer was significant. "I like the life," he said. Life in the

[1] There are, of course, other common subjects of meditation. In the Auguttara Nikaya, for instance, the following list of ten is recommended: (1) The Buddha; (2) Dharma (the Law); (3) Sangha (the Order); (4) the Precepts; (5) Charity; (6) the Gods; (7) inhaled and exhaled Breath; (8) Death; (9) the Thirty-two Constituents of the Body; (10) release from suffering. (Atthana Vagga, I, XVI.) In the early days of Buddhism the monks carried meditation to the point of *samadhi* — a state of auto-hypnosis; but this practice has long since been given up. This Yoga practice and many of the subjects of meditation were taken over into Buddhism directly from pre-Buddhistic India, and have no relation to Gautama's essential thought. Cf. for instance, the sixth and seventh subjects of the list just given.

monastery is one of scholarly ease — or just ease. It may offer also an opportunity for occasional usefulness as a preacher or teacher; but the monk is exceedingly rare to whom the desire for helpfulness is the chief attraction. They *like the life.*

The Buddhism of Ceylon is very similar to that of Burma. What contrast there is between the two may be stated in general terms by saying that the Ceylonese are less devout and more learned than the Burmans. This is true of both monks and laymen. On entering Ceylon from Burma one is struck by the absence of pagodas and the almost entire lack of worshipers at the shrines except on *poya* days. In place of the pagoda, with its shrine open to all who will come, is substituted the closed *vihara* or temple with its hidden image and the *dagoba* with its buried relic. These temples and dagobas are extremely rare in comparison with the pagodas of Burma, so profusely scattered over the land. Moreover, they are to be found as a rule only within monastery enclosures, and the temples are regularly locked except on poya days. These come in theory four times a month, practically but twice, namely, on the new and full moon. On these two days one sees the same sort of devotion at the temples on the part of the people that one may witness almost every day at a Burmese pagoda. There are the same recitation of sacred texts in Pali and in the vernacular, the same reverence and prostrations, the same offerings of flowers and candles. In explanation of the small number of worshipers at the public shrines in Ceylon, moreover, it must be remembered that the climate here is much more trying than in Burma, and that the devout Buddhist may perfectly well perform his devotions in the coolness of his own home. Home worship is much the same in Ceylon as in Burma and there is the same appeasement of spirits good and bad. There are, to be sure, no nats in Ceylon, but their place is taken by the devas or devatas borrowed from Hindu mythology. The most important of these are Sakara (the Vedic Indra), Brahma, Vishnu, Ishwara, and Shiva. Images of these or other devatas are to be found in the vestibules of nearly all the temples, and sometimes within the temples themselves; and they receive homage and offerings only after the Buddha. Not only do the monks believe in these devas; Colonel Olcott, in his "Cate-

chism," which has had so great an influence in Buddhist religious education, gravely teaches that there are three kinds of devas, and that if we are *very* good they cannot hurt us, but if we are bad we had best watch out. Another important part of Singhalese religion is the adoration of the pipal tree (*ficus religiosa*). In a monastery at Anuradhapura still stands the famous pipal tree brought by Sanghamitta, the daughter of King Ashoka, to Ceylon about 240 B.C., a scion of the sacred "Bo tree" under which Gautama received enlightenment at Buddh Gaya. A descendant of this greatest treasure of Anuradhapura is to be found in the compound of almost every large vihara in the island, where, on poya days, it receives nearly as much homage as does the image of the Buddha himself. But it is not only these monastery trees that are held sacred. On the roadside and in other places one comes upon pipal trees, large or small, before which rude altars have been erected and offerings of flags and flowers strewn. As is the case with so many other religious customs, the theory back of this is uncertain and unimportant. Some Buddhists will tell you that the spirit of the tree is being worshiped; others that the offerings are presented merely as a sign of grateful remembrance that the pipal tree once sheltered the Lord Buddha. The truth is, of course, that the theory plays but a small part in the mind of the worshiper. One adores the Bo tree because it is the thing to do — and because one thereby acquires merit.

When one reads of the devatas in Ceylon and the nats in Burma and the tree-cult in both countries, one is inclined to say, How Buddhism has degenerated since its early days! There is no doubt that modern Buddhism, even in the South, is decidedly impure; but the truth is that the Buddhism of the people, even in the good old days of its earliest propagation, has always been impure. To see what early Buddhism was one should go, not to the Pitakas, but to the Buddhist carvings from Mathura, Bharut, Sanchi, and other ancient centers of the religion. The Mathura reliefs, from the sixth century A.D., show that at that time Buddhism was shockingly intermingled with Tantra worship: gay, not to say indecent, female figures are more prominent in the sculptures than the figure of the Buddha. The Bharut Tope (150 B.C.) makes

much of Sirima Devata, the goddess of wealth, and other female figures abound. And in the carvings at Sanchi, perhaps the earliest of all, Saraswati (the wife of Brahma) is an important figure, and almost the chief object of representation is the adoration of the sacred tree. Brahma and Vishnu are common figures in Buddhist sculpture all over the northwest. And if one goes back to the Pitakas themselves he finds no such pure philosophical doctrine as Western books on Buddhism would often have one believe. The whole drama of Buddha's life is presented on a background of Hindu mythology, and even in the teachings of Gautama the old gods are referred to as real beings, quite as a matter of course. To be sure the gods throughout early Buddhism are always represented as inferior to the Buddha; but so are they also in the Buddhism of Burma and Ceylon.

Ceylon, like Burma, is inhabited, or threatened, by devils who play their usual part in the production of sickness and other human ills. In both Burma and Ceylon astrology is one of the most important and lucrative of the arts, and one frequently comes upon advertisements like the following, "Horoscopes drawn telling all future events," "Marks on the body reveal all events, good and bad." The moral teachings of Buddhism are, of course, the same in Ceylon as in Burma, but on the whole they seem to have less effect. At any rate, the Ceylonese are not so noted for their kindness to animals as are the Burmese. Yet I think they would not suffer greatly in comparison with us Westerners. And certainly their religion lends all its force to the side of kindness toward the dumb world. This in fact is carried to an extent which to us would often seem fantastic. The walls of many a monastery are frescoed (for the benefit of the lay visitor) with pictures of the sufferings in hell that await the hunter and him who kills insects. Copleston asserts that an injured man might lie by the wayside all day calling for help and no Buddhist would go out of his way to help him;[1] and many

[1] *Buddhism in Magadha and Ceylon* (second edition, London, Longmans, 1908), p. 285. While this assertion seems to me to give a wrong impression, if taken as a characterization of all Singhalese Buddhists, I do not doubt that in many cases it would apply. Dr. Copleston had years of experience in

missionaries (reported in Mr. Saunders's Questionnaire) insist that most Buddhists consider lying a smaller sin than killing a flea. I feel very certain that the former of these statements is mistaken and I am inclined to think the latter exaggerated.

The better class of monks in Ceylon are, as I have said, more learned and intelligent than those in Burma. This hardly holds true, however, of the rank and file — for certainly in both countries these are ignorant enough. Twenty years ago Dr. Bowles Daly made an exhaustive investigation of the monasteries in Ceylon and reports: "There are about nine thousand monks; among them a few — very few — great scholars; the majority are illiterate, and some to avoid labour, seek a life of indolence sheltered by the yellow robes of the priesthood; many are depraved. There are, however, some examples of personal piety, devotion, and self-denial, which would be an ornament to any church." [1]

The monks in Ceylon are less active, less influential, and more reserved than those in Burma. They are much less in evidence in public, as they do but little begging, their food being taken to them in the monasteries by pious laymen. Their monasteries are often, characteristically, farther removed from the madding crowd than is usually the case in Burma — tucked away on some hillside or in the heart of the jungle. It would be hard to find more ideal retreats for the contemplative life than are, for instance, some of the monasteries near Galle, in the midst of palm groves or on a forest-covered ridge, or the famous Alut Vihara at Matale, perched on the top of its isolated rock. Fortunately for the legs of the little boys, the monasteries are not the schools of the land as they are in Burma. Most boys go to Government or private schools, and it is not

Ceylon and knew of what he spoke. In this connection another quotation from him may be of interest: "If it is asked, to begin with, whether the Singhalese are evidently and unmistakably influenced in their lives by the religion which they profess, as Mohammedans for instance are, the answer must be, No; except in the matter of scrupulousness about taking the life of animals. In other matters, whether a man's conduct were good or bad, he would seldom allege religion as his motive. Religion is a matter of obtaining merit by certain offerings and attendances; not, in ordinary cases, a matter of conduct." (*Op. cit.*, p. 284.)

[1] Quoted by H. Hackmann in his *Buddhism as a Religion* (London, Probsthain, 1910), p. 118.

the custom for them, as it is for the Burmese, to take for a time the yellow robe. Still the order as a whole is respected and a family feels honored when one of its members enters the monkhood.

An interesting combination of the monk and the layman is the *upasaka*. This word originally applied to all laymen, for all were supposed to take upon themselves at times a certain additional training which ordinarily obtained only for the monks. Not many do this to-day, and the word upasaka now refers to particularly devout laymen (more often laywomen) who four times a month — namely, on poya days — observe the monk's sixth, seventh, and eighth vows (given above), and go daily to the vihara or temple with offerings to the Buddha and to the devatas and gifts to the monks and the poor. These upasakas are often very admirable characters, understand and obey the spirit of helpfulness that animates their religion at its best, and give up much of their time to deeds of real mercy and kindness.

In their architecture, their costumes, their customs the Singhalese are much less picturesque than are the Burmese; and largely for this reason their type of Buddhism seems to the stranger decidedly less attractive than does the Burmese type. Their closer contact with Western civilization also has not been exclusively an advantage. And, as I have said, there is no doubt that they are less devout in their religion than the Burmese. But it would be a mistake to suppose that they are a bad people or that their religion is without influence. The Singhalese are an intelligent, moral, and attractive race, and there can be little doubt that they owe an eternal debt of gratitude to Prince Mahinda, who first brought to them the teachings of India's greatest Teacher. Unfortunately neither they nor the Burmese have kept that teaching as pure as they might have — though they have done immeasurably better in this respect than any of the Northern Buddhists. And this brings us to the means by which that teaching is handed on, the religious education of both these peoples — a subject which must be reserved to the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVII

EDUCATION AND REFORM

AMONG every people in any way devout, religious education necessarily begins in childhood, whether there is any conscious and explicit effort at instruction or not. And so of course it is among the Burmese and Singhalese. A very common sight at every frequented pagoda in Burma is the arrival of a whole family for its daily or weekly devotions. The father and mother and older children reverently prostrate themselves before the Buddha, while the youngest children for a few minutes play about; then, led by the subtle impulse to imitate, they take positions like those of the older members of the family — quite without being told to do so. Thus before they can talk they learn the formal and outward acts of worship which are to constitute so large an element in their religion for the rest of their days.

If they have the good fortune to be the children of devout and careful parents they will hear from their lips, while still very young, many of the Jataka stories — excellent folk-tales, most of them about animals, in which the hero is always the Buddha in some previous birth, and containing a moral lesson of the glory of unselfish kindness which the child is not likely to forget till he himself is ready for another incarnation. This good old custom, however, is now on the wane, at least in Ceylon, and many children receive but little explicit religious instruction till the time comes for them to go to school.

In Burma the great majority of the boys still go to the monasteries for at least a large part of their schooling. Here, besides the ordinary elements, they get further instruction in the ceremonial side of their religion, learn a little about the life of Gautama, and commit to memory certain formulæ in Pali and Burmese — those given on pages 345 and 346 of this book and a few others. As I have said before, many of them never understand fully — or they soon forget — the meaning of the Pali verses which they learn to say. This is an evil state of things

which is recognized by the more intelligent pongyis. In the large Masoyein Taik in Mandalay, for instance, they refuse to teach a boy any Pali text till he has first learned the meaning of it. Such care, however, is uncommon, and mere parrot learning is the rule. Of course the boys learn the meaning of *some* of the texts which they memorize, and this is especially true of the Five Precepts. These moral teachings receive the greatest emphasis; and whatever else the boys learn or fail to learn, they know before leaving school that it is wrong to kill, to steal, to be impure, to lie, and to drink. The monastic schools are hardly centers of the intellectual life; yet they have their good points. A Rangoon Buddhist, who ought to know, writes of the system of monastic schools that it "teaches self-abasement, respect, obedience, morals, and good manners." They certainly learn the latter. In spite of this, however, the tendency to-day is all away from the monastic schools toward the Government schools, where better instruction in the practical branches, especially in English, is to be had. Here also, they receive some instruction in Buddhism. Burmese girls, of course, cannot go to the monasteries for their education: but there are usually girls' schools conducted by the monks at or near the pagoda; and they may also go to the Government schools where they receive the same religious education as the boys. An effort is also being made by the "Association for the Propagation of Buddhism" to found schools which shall combine the advantages of both the monastic and the Government schools, — namely, the best instruction in the practical branches and the best training in Buddhist religion and morality. Several schools for boys and one or two for girls have already been started by the association, and it seems probable that the movement will grow, especially if ever wealthy Buddhists can be convinced that to endow a school brings one as much merit as to gild a pagoda.

In Ceylon there are no monastery schools, in spite of which fact the children of the well-to-do, on the whole, receive quite as much religious instruction of the explicit, book-and-lecture type, as do the little Burmese, though they miss the constant training in devotion to the Buddha, reverence toward one's teachers, and respect for the past which daily life in a monas-

tery must bring. Thirty or forty years ago Colonel Olcott, of the Theosophical Society, began founding Buddhist schools all over southern Ceylon in which boys and girls could get both a good general education and an intelligent understanding of their own religion. To-day there are upwards of two hundred and fifty such schools, managed by the Buddhist branch of the Theosophical Society. The Maha-Bodhi Society has also taken up the work of education and controls about twenty-two schools. In all of these Theosophist and Maha-Bodhi schools Buddhism is explicitly taught, from one to five hours a week being given to it. In the schools which lay most emphasis on religious instruction the children get a good deal. They are taught first of all the Five Precepts, the "Refuge," and the proper reverence to the "Three Gems" (the Buddha, the Law, and the Order); then *charity*, which means making offerings to the Buddha, to the monks, and to the poor. Many texts are studied and learned by heart, both in Pali and in translation. Emphasis is laid upon reverence, not only to the "Three Gems," but to parents, teachers, and older brothers and sisters. The more advanced pupils are also taught something about the "Four Noble Truths" — the center of Buddhist philosophy — and the way of reaching Nirvana. So elaborate a programme as this, of course, is not for all; but all the Theosophist and Maha-Bodhi schools see to it that their pupils obtain *some* intelligent instruction in their religion. The younger classes are, of course, taught orally; while the more advanced have textbooks. Many of these are in the vernacular, but the highest classes study out of books in English. For this purpose the Theosophist schools use Colonel Olcott's "Buddhist Catechism," and Paul Carus's "The Gospel of Buddha"; while the Maha-Bodhi schools use Subhadra Bhikshu's "Buddhist Catechism" — an excellent book of which I shall have more to say in our next chapter.[1] There is a marked difference

[1] Colonel Olcott's *Catechism* has gone through forty-three editions and is published by the Theosophical Publishing Society, whose chief office is at Adyar (near Madras). Paul Carus's book appeared in 1894, and the latest edition (the thirteenth) was published in 1910 (Open Court, Chicago). The *Buddhist Catechism*, by Subhadra Bhikshu, was first published in German in 1888. The English edition is a translation from the eighth German edition. It is published by the Maha-Bodhi Society in Colombo.

between these books: the two latter passing over in silence most of the magical and supernormal elements of Buddhism, or interpreting them symbolically, while Colonel Olcott's "Catechism" — in true Theosophist style — makes a special effort to teach such things as the "Aura" emitted by the Buddha and various holy Bhikkhus,[1] as well as from certain dagobas in Ceylon where relics of the Buddha are said to be enshrined. This, Colonel Olcott teaches, is a scientific fact, as are also various other magical or "occult" things from the Pitakas, such as multiple appearance, and "Iddhi power" (which may be attained, says the "Catechism," from the recitation of mantras, ascetic practices, etc.), or the power to look backward or forward in time with perfect retrospective or prophetic vision, etc. It is most unfortunate for the development of Buddhism and for the intellectual future of Ceylon that this book is used so much more than the others, disseminating as it does not only the more superstitious elements of Buddhism, but giving the Singhalese youth a badly warped idea of what "modern science" means.

The Theosophist and Maha-Bodhi schools, of course, cost money; hence are not for all. The tuition fee varies, in some being seven and a half rupees a month. The poor who cannot afford this send their boys for a little religious instruction to the monks in the monasteries, where they work for their lessons. These lessons are of an extremely unsystematic character — resembling the instruction in the Burmese monasteries in type, but apparently in most respects much inferior. The boys learn the Five Precepts, the way to kneel before the Buddha, the way to hold their hands when praying to Him and the way to hold them when praying to the devatas, and a few Pali texts of which they never come to know the meaning.

The religious instruction of the adult Buddhist is very much less systematic and thorough than is that of the child. Some instruct themselves to some extent by reading vernacular translations of the sacred books. For this purpose the Jataka stories are the most popular, and are practically the only Buddhist books that the people read themselves. Some of these stories are also presented in "*pwes*" or plays, of which

[1] The ancient word for Buddhist monk.

the Burmese are extremely fond, and which thus fill the place taken by the miracle plays in mediæval Christianity. The monks, it must be remembered, are primarily neither priests nor preachers: their first aim is their own salvation. Yet they do, on occasion, give religious instruction to the people. If a family or an individual wishes to hear the sacred books read or to have special instruction in religious truth, a monk will come to the home and read or preach. A special offering is, of course, expected in return. Moreover, at the full moon and the new moon there is usually in every community a public reading of the Law followed by an explanation of it. In some communities this may be done as often as four times a month. The attendance at the time of full moon is usually large, and the monastery on that evening forms a very pretty sight. The people begin to come soon after dark, bearing offerings of flowers which they lay at the feet of the Buddha, and candles which they place within the shrine and about all the sacred things in the compound. In Ceylon the various smaller shrines are thus adorned; the dagoba is circled with candles, and the great Bo tree is especially brilliant. When the candle ceremony is finished, about nine or later, the people assemble in the large preaching hall made for the purpose, and squatting upon the floor listen to the monks who read — or more exactly *recite* — for hours from the Pali books, accompanying their reading by a running explanation and commentary. At the new moon but few turn out and most of these go home before the reading; and the two other "duty days" are observed by only a handful. Besides these stated readings, a specially zealous monk may announce that at a certain time and in a certain place he will read the Law and all may come who wish. This is more common in Burma than in Ceylon: in the island the monks are very reserved and will not preach or read (outside of "poya" days) unless specially invited to do so. "We are too proud," one monk said to me; "we have too much respect for the Lord Buddha and for his religion to force it upon those who do not first ask for it."

Besides the reading from the sacred books, the "preaching" may include exhortation to righteousness. Harmlessness, kindness, love, purity, and the avoidance of the three great

fetters of lust, anger, and ignorance, are urged. The theoretical part of the Buddhist teaching — the "Four Noble Truths" and the doctrine of impermanence and selflessness — are seldom taught in these popular discourses and are reserved for the more advanced. Attendance at these various preaching services is, of course, left entirely to the conscience of each family or individual, and so far as I could discover no attempt is ever made to seek and find the lost sheep and bring them back to the fold. Each Buddhist is his own master and no one is his brother's keeper. The state of your soul is none of my business, and if you wish to pile up evil Karma for yourself, it is your affair, not mine.

Where so little effort is made to keep those born in the Buddhist faith true to their religion, there is, of course, little thought of bringing into the fold those born outside it. A few laymen in both Burma and Ceylon favor (in a passive sort of way) attempts at proselyting, but there is hardly a monk in either land who would think of taking the first steps to convert a non-Buddhist. If the non-Buddhist inquires after the truth, the monk will be really glad to help him find it; but he has too much respect for the independence of every individual to seek to spread the Law among those who do not wish for it.

It is doubtless as a result of this listlessness in teaching and propagating their religion that many of the monks are becoming rather pessimistic of its future. Particularly is this the case in Burma. Many Burmese monks said to me that Buddhism was on the wane and that they looked forward to its complete extinction in Burma and in the world. This, however, did not seem greatly to trouble them. They correlated it — and logically enough — with the prophecy of Gautama, that in five thousand years after his death, the true doctrine would die out of the world and the new Buddha, Maitreya, would have to come to restore it. Thus the very decline of their religion they hail as a fulfillment of the prophecy of its founder. In Ceylon, on the other hand, the feeling was much more hopeful — owing, perhaps, to the more determined and systematic effort in that island at the education of the young. Something also is being done (though not much) toward the conversion of the Tamils.

If the monks are content to wait for Maitreya Buddha to restore the true doctrine and reconvert mankind, there are many Buddhist laymen in both Ceylon and Burma who have not so much of the virtue of patience, and who are willing to risk defeat and disappointment in the effort to spread again the pure doctrine of the Law and the old enthusiasm for it. In Burma they have several institutions with this end. One is the Y.M.B.A. ("Young Men's Buddhist Association") with activities of various sorts, athletic, intellectual, and religious, in imitation of the Y.M.C.A. I was told that it was in a somewhat moribund, or at least hibernating, condition; but its aim, at least, — the retention of the young men and their upbuilding in the Buddhist faith and the cultivation of their moral character, — speaks well for its founders. Then there is the "Association for the Propagation of Buddhism," whose educational work has already been referred to. Other centers of reform effort are the "Mandalay Society for Promoting Buddhism" and the "Rangoon College Buddhist Association," both of which publish periodicals devoted to the spread of pure Buddhism. The latter in addition holds young men's meetings for religious and moral instruction and discussion.[1] Mention should also be made of the "Burman" and one or two other periodicals of Buddhist reform; and especially of the preaching of Ledi Sadaw, — known all over Burma as the "Great Teacher," — a kind of Buddhist revivalist and at the same time a real scholar, who though himself a monk has caught the laymen's spirit of reform and devotes his entire time to study, writing, and itinerant preaching. The example of Ledi Sadaw is a shining exception; for the monkhood as a whole is either indifferent or positively hostile to the new movement.

[1] The objects of the "Mandalay Society for Promoting Buddhism" (which was "established A.B. 2444") are: —
(1) To maintain the Buddhist monks in food, etc.
(2) To promote the learning of Buddhist Scriptures.
(3) To start an Anglo-vernacular Buddhist school.
(4) To publish a monthly Buddhist journal.
(5) To start a printing-press.
(6) To look after the Buddhist monasteries, pagodas, inscriptions, etc.
(7) To train Buddhist monks in different languages and send them abroad as missionaries.

The monks, indeed, are losing their influence over the laity of Burma and are becoming conscious of the loss. This is due in part to the fact that every year more parents take their children out of the monastery schools and send them where they can receive more modern instruction. In part it is due to the fact that many monks, after a few years in the monastery, now give up the religious life and return to the world — a tendency nearly as noticeable, in this active age, among Buddhists as in the Roman Catholic Church, and one which, at least in Burma, is bringing the monastic life into disrespect among the people. The monastic ideal is declining the world over, in Buddhist lands as well as in Christian.

The reform movement in Ceylon resembles closely that in Burma. Here, however, there is perhaps a greater emphasis upon education, more intelligent and concerted effort, and a more hopeful and enthusiastic attitude of mind. The movement is also characterized by a more pronounced antagonism to Christian missionary effort. Four chief means of reform, instruction, and propagation are used. (1) The Buddhist schools of which I have already spoken. Some of these are deliberately placed to counteract the influence of Christian schools. One missionary told me — in aggrieved tones — that wherever a Christian school was started, a Buddhist school is set up with the deliberate aim of emptying the former; and in some cases, he added, the Buddhists succeed. (2) Buddhist institutions are founded in imitation of Christian institutions which are known to have worked well. The Y.M.B.A. has been at work for some years in Ceylon, and now they have founded a Buddhist Sunday-School. Most important, perhaps, of these institutions are the "Maha-Bodhi Society," and the recently founded "International Buddhist Brotherhood," which aims to unite Buddhists of all lands — northern and southern — in an attempt at reviving the work and spirit of Gautama. (3) Itinerant preachers are sent about. (4) The printing-press is kept busy turning out Buddhist tracts and periodicals, containing both instruction in Buddhism and attacks upon Christianity. The Theosophist Buddhists publish a weekly paper in the vernacular and the Maha-Bodhi Society another, — each disseminating about six thousand

copies every week. The Maha-Bodhi Society also publishes a monthly in English, known as "The Maha-Bodhi and the United Buddhist World."

This Maha-Bodhi Society is the most promising force for reform within Buddhism that I came upon in either Burma or Ceylon. I use the word "promising" advisedly, for though it occasionally lends itself to unscholarly and frantic attacks upon Christianity with ammunition drawn from the rationalist press, its great aim is the moral and intellectual regeneration of Buddhism, and as a rule it puts its emphasis in the right place. It was founded in 1891, by Mr. H. Dharmapala, a scholarly layman of Colombo who represented Southern Buddhism in the Chicago Congress of Religions in 1893, and who is still the head of the society. He realized that to do the most possible for his fellow-countrymen he must be neither lay nor clerical. The layman is too busy with the affairs of the world and its ties to give himself up absolutely to the work of reform; and the monk, living in the monastery, is too far removed — physically and spiritually — from the world which the reformer would help. So Mr. Dharmapala took the vows and the yellow robe of the monk, but lives in the world, and gives up his time to preaching the pure Buddhism of Gautama. This, he says, is nowhere to be found to-day; with the exception of a few individuals here and there, there are no real Buddhists left in the world. The doctrine of the Master has been so overlaid with successive layers of accretions that it is no longer recognizable. His aim and that of the Maha-Bodhi Society is, therefore, to tear off all these accretions and to go back to that part of Buddhism which originated with the Buddha.[1] The two points that he emphasizes most in his preaching and his writing are *Activity* and the importance of the *Present Moment.*

[1] The specific aims of the Maha-Bodhi Society are thus officially expressed: "To make known to all nations the sublime teachings of the Buddha Sakya Muni; to reëstablish a monastery and college at Calcutta, Benares, and Isapatana for the residence of Bhikkhus of Thibet, Ceylon, China, Japan, Burma, Siam, Cambodia, Chittagong, Nepal, Korea, and Arakan; for training young men of unblemished character of whatsoever race and country for carrying abroad the message of peace and brotherly love promulgated by the Divine Teacher twenty-four centuries ago."

The Singhalese are too fond of putting off to another time important matters and of looking forward to a future incarnation to set things right. Hence he never ceases urging upon them that *now, now*, is the time to do whatever is worth doing, and that it is here and now that they must look for salvation and Nirvana if it is ever to be attained. The other point is even more important. Buddhism must not be made into a religion of passivity and idleness. The Buddha himself was always active and always preaching activity. And by activity Mr. Dharmapala means (1) unremitting alertness against the innumerable and subtle temptations of sloth, ignorance, lust, anger, envy, avarice, pride, and the rest; and (2) constant endeavor to help others into a knowledge of the truth with its resulting peace and joy. In preaching activity and unselfishness as the great Buddhist virtues he has to deal with the example of the monks; and no Christian missionary could be more unsparing in his invectives. The monks live, he says, a life of lazy and selfish retirement; their chief religious function is ringing the temple bell, and their chief activity is often that of drinking tea. It is against them a large part of his preaching is directed, and the people are exhorted not to take them as ideals. He also calls upon the people not to identify religion with external observances and the repetition of meaningless formulas, but to work out their own salvation as the Lord Buddha taught, by means of moral activity. It is wrong to trust to the ringing of a bell as the monks do at the dagobas: and it is wrong to trust to prayer to an imaginary deity as the Christian *padres* do. Only one's own moral activity can really lead to peace.

The people, he assures me, respond to this sort of doctrine, and at many a remote village after he has preached they say to him, "This sort of simple teaching we can understand. But why did not some one tell us this before?"

Unfortunately there are not many men in Ceylon or Burma like Mr. Dharmapala. But he is kindling a fire that may not be extinguished. For he has seen that the glory of Buddhism lies in the spirit of service which so dominated its great founder; and he has chosen as the motto of the society those noble words addressed by the Buddha to his earliest disciples: "Go

ye, O Bhikkhus, and wander forth for the gain of the many, the welfare of the many, in compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men. Proclaim, O Bhikkhus, the Doctrine glorious, preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DOCTRINES OF MODERN BUDDHISM

THE most universally accepted and the most influential of the doctrines of Buddhism is undoubtedly the belief in rebirth and Karma. This, as popularly understood, differs hardly at all from the corresponding Hindu doctrine from which it was, of course, derived. The important modifications made by the Buddha, in consequence of his having done away with a substantial self or soul, are known only to the more learned, and for the layman are almost non-existent. For him the truth is very simple: one dies, goes to heaven or hell for a shorter or longer period, until a certain amount of his merit or demerit has been consumed, and then is reborn into this world in accordance with the deeds done in his former body. In a general way this belief is borne out by the orthodox Buddhist teaching — which in fact provides not only rebirth and several heavens and hells, but also a preliminary and intermediate state which two Buddhist authorities (Professor Rhys-Davids and Mr. F. L. Woodward) translate "purgatory." There is, however, no place in the orthodox philosophy for the popular belief in the reward and rebirth of the identical individual. Since for Buddhism the self is merely a collection of qualities, there is no real self or ego to be rewarded or reborn. This *anatta* doctrine of the merely phenomenal nature of the self is, as I have indicated, quite unknown to most laymen and to the less learned of the monks; but many monks there are in both Burma and Ceylon who understand and hold it and teach it in quite the manner of Nagasena in his famous conversations with King Milinda in the classic days of Buddhism.[1] The Hermit of Mandalay Hill expounded it to me by asking: "Where, sir, is the monastery? Is this column the monastery? Is this brick the monastery? Surely there is no being known

[1] *The Questions of King Milinda*, II, I (translated by Rhys-Davids), S. B. E. vol. xxxv. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1890.)

as *the monastery* here to be found. So there is no self, but only a collection of members and of characteristics — name and form." This is sound Buddhist doctrine, and however it pleases us we must admit that it is surprisingly modern in tone and thoroughly consistent with Western science and philosophy. In essentials it is the doctrine of Hume, of Friedrich Paulsen and William James, of Pragmatism and of most modern psychology.

But if there be no ego or soul, what is there to be reborn? The "Buddhist Catechism," by Subhadra Bhikshu (which as I said in the last chapter is used as a textbook in some of the Buddhist schools and is, perhaps, as authoritative a presentation of Buddhism as can be found in any modern summary) answers this question as follows: —

"It is our will-to-live and our moral character that are reborn. These form the core of our being, and create for themselves after the disintegration of our present body a new one, corresponding exactly to their nature."

The "Catechism" goes on to ask: —

"Then the being which is reborn is not the same which died?"

And the answer is: —

"It is not the same and not another. It may seem to be another to a man still in the state of ignorance, who wrongly identifies his personal ego-consciousness with his true being. He who has attained wisdom knows that his real being is his will-to-live and his moral character ["Tanha" and "Karma"]; but that the recurring ego-consciousness is only a transient phenomenon, to be compared to the torch lit by a wanderer at night to find his way. When he does not need it any more he extinguishes it, to light a new torch for a later wandering. Thus, though the ego-consciousness may change, it is in a sense by the tie of Karma always the same individuality which in one birth does the good or bad deeds and in the next reaps the fruits of these deeds, though in the absence of any substance passing from one life to the next it is not absolutely the same." [1]

But just as there are few disciples of Hume who consistently

[1] Pages 36–37.

speak as if the self were merely "a bundle or collection of different perceptions," so there are few Buddhists who carry out their doctrine of the ego in all its logical implications. Possibly heaven, hell, and "purgatory," for which chapter and verse in the sacred books can be cited, may be made consistent with this doctrine. But it is harder to see how on this view there is any hope for the reunion of friends on the other side of death. And yet this hope certainly is held by some in both Burma and Ceylon, and even justified as a possibility by some of the scholars of Buddhism.[1]

There is, then, a practical kind of agreement between learned and ignorant on the question of heaven, hell, and rebirth. And concerning retribution and the law of Karma there is even more complete unanimity. All Buddhists believe with the Hindus that sequence of reward following upon good deeds and punishment following evil deeds is eternal and inevitable; that what we sow we reap through endless ages. Whether high or low, ignorant or learned, the Buddhist has an unshakable and unquestioning, almost a naïve, confidence in the absolute justice of the universe.

There is no such unanimity between the ignorant and the learned on the question of the present condition of the Buddha — a question of very practical importance considering his central position in Buddhist thought and worship. The more ignorant Buddhists — including some even of the monks — accept the Buddha to all practical purposes as a god. For many of them he leads a conscious and joyous existence, hears the prayers of his followers and answers them. This, of course, is not the orthodox view, and all the more intelligent monks will assure you that the Buddha is beyond hearing petitions or answering prayers. In the words of a monk in Kandy and of another in Galle with whom I talked and whose English was not so good as their Pali, "Buddha *finish*." A monk in Rangoon put it thus: "Buddha is not living; he is beyond conscious-

[1] Cf. an article, "Death and After," by Professor E. J. Mills, in the *Buddhist Review* for October, 1912, especially p. 295. Fielding Hall has a pathetic story of a Burmese woman who believed that her dead lover was reborn in the body of her baby, and who when the baby died went herself into the other world hoping to join him there. *The Soul of a People* [London, Macmillan, 1911], pp. 306–08).

ness and has neither consciousness nor soul. He is inactive and can do nothing for us actively. He lives only in his teachings. He is in Nirvana." And a monk at Mandalay put it in much the same way: "Buddha is non-existent so far as we know, and has no consciousness of what happens here. He certainly does not hear prayer. He is in Nirvana."

As the words of both these monks suggest, the question of the Buddha's present status inevitably raises in the Western mind the question of the nature of Nirvana. I say "in the Western mind," for Nirvana as a state after death certainly plays a much more important part in Western ideas of Buddhism than in the thoughts of Buddhists. The masses know they have so little chance at Nirvana for thousands of years that they do not much trouble their heads over its nature. And the two most intelligent Buddhists I ever met assured me that the fact that I asked about Nirvana showed I was going at Buddhism from the wrong — the Western — end. And, indeed, they have the authority of the Buddha himself for their words. In the Majjhima-Nikaya we are told that this question of the condition of the saint after death once presented itself to the venerable Malunkyaputta, one of Gautama's favorite disciples. And he said to himself: —

"These questions which the Blessed One has left unelucidated, has set aside and rejected, — whether the world is eternal, whether the world is infinite, whether the saint exists after death, — these the Blessed One does not elucidate to me. And the fact that the Blessed One does not elucidate them to me does not please me. I will therefore draw near to the Blessed One and inquire of him concerning this matter."

So he arose and drew near to the Blessed One and put his questions, closing them by saying: —

"If the Blessed One knows that the world is eternal, or that the world is infinite, or that the saint exists after death, or that he does not exist after death, let the Blessed One elucidate these things to me. If the Blessed One does not know, the only upright thing for one who does not know, who has not that insight, is to say, 'I do not know: I have not that insight.'"

To this the Buddha responded: —

"Pray, Malunkyaputta, did I ever say to you, 'Come,

Malunkyaputta, lead the religious life under me and I will elucidate to you whether the world is eternal or infinite and whether the saint exists or does not exist after death?' Malunkyaputta, any one who should say, 'I will not lead the religious life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One shall elucidate to me these questions; that person would die, Malunkyaputta, before the Perfect One had ever elucidated them to him. It is as if a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his relatives and kinsfolk, were to procure for him a physician; and the sick man were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learned whether the man who wounded me belonged to the warrior caste, or the Brahmin caste, or to the agricultural caste, or to the menial caste'; or as if he were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I learn the name of the man who wounded me and to what clan he belongs; or till I have learned whether he was black, or dusky, or of a yellow skin; or till I have learned whether the arrow was an ordinary arrow, or a claw-headed arrow, or an iron arrow, or a calf-tooth arrow.' That man would die, Malunkyaputta, without ever having learned this. In exactly the same way, Malunkyaputta, any one who should say, 'I will not lead the religious life under the Blessed One until he shall elucidate to me whether the world is eternal and whether the saint exists after death, — that person would die, Malunkyaputta, before the Perfect One had ever elucidated this to him.

"The religious life does not depend on the dogma that the world is eternal or infinite, or that the saint exists after death. Whether these doctrines are true or false there still remain birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, despair, for the extinction of which in the present life I am prescribing. Accordingly, Malunkyaputta, bear always in mind what it is that I have not elucidated. And why have I not elucidated these questions? Because they profit not, they have not to do with the fundamentals of religion, therefore have I not elucidated them." [1]

[1] Translated by Warren in his *Buddhism in Translations* (published by Harvard University, 1896), pp. 117–22. I have greatly abbreviated the passage.

The Buddha, in short, insisted — and he did it repeatedly and consistently — that he came not to teach philosophy, but to save the world. And in this he showed his wisdom. He would not allow the attention of his followers to be deflected from the main issue. He was determined that the emphasis should be put in the right place. Were he alive to-day he would probably point out to us how sadly religion has suffered — how sadly Christianity has suffered — by the confusion of the religious life with metaphysics; and how the union of religion with speculation lays it open to certain and unnecessary attack. The state of the saint after death — Nirvana — may be conscious or it may not; but in neither case has it anything to do with "absence of passion, quiescence, and supreme wisdom."

But while it is true that the Buddha never committed himself on the question whether the saint existed or did not exist after death, and while doubtless the orthodox Buddhist should follow his example, there is still something to be gleaned from the sacred books concerning Nirvana, and nearly all the monks, learned and ignorant alike, have more or less decided views on the subject. One monk, who had evidently read widely in Buddhist literature, told me that Nirvana was "eternal happiness." This "happiness," he said, was a very different thing from *pleasure*. There was no pleasure in Nirvana, nothing worldly; but Nirvana was a state of *conscious* happiness none the less and by no means a cessation of consciousness. An upasaka who taught Buddhism in a boys' school told me practically the same thing: to use his own words, Nirvana means "eternal comfort"; and the abbot of the leading Malwatta[1] monastery in Kandy agreed with him in this definition. Probably this is the view that many monks and laymen hold. On the other hand, the majority of the learned monks with whom I have talked in both Burma and Ceylon, as well as several of the laymen, insisted that Nirvana is not a conscious state at all. I quoted to the monk at Galle (to whom I referred

[1] The most important of the two subdivisions of the Siamese Order of monks in Ceylon. About fifty per cent of Buddhist monks in Ceylon belong to the so-called Siamese Order. There are two other orders, the Amarapura and Ramanya.

above) the definitions of Nirvana as "eternal happiness" and "eternal comfort," and he asserted stoutly that these views were absolutely mistaken. In his own picturesque word again, Nirvana means "*finish*"; — "comfort and happiness finish as well as discomfort and sorrow." Something like this was the view of most of the monks with whom I talked, and it certainly would seem to be the logical conclusion from the premises. For when Karma and the will-to-live cease to act, even the shadow of a self which Buddhism recognizes ceases to exist. As there is nothing and no one to be conscious, and no reproduction of name, form, characteristics, or "Khandas," it is hard to see how Nirvana can be anything but the end of consciousness — in other words, "finish"! Such was evidently the reasoning of the monks with whom I talked. And they almost all added that they longed for Nirvana because conscious life was necessarily evil. The *people*, they told me, — and I thought this significant, — did not really want Nirvana. What *they* desired was heaven and a good rebirth.

One old monk, however, with whom I had a long interview through an interpreter, had a more agnostic view concerning Nirvana. The boy or young man who had come with me to interpret was a very well-informed and thoughtful Buddhist. We had had a long talk on our way to the monastery concerning the Buddhist and the Burmese view of life, and he had assured me that many of the Burmese, in spite of their gay exterior, were sad at heart; and that for his own part, life seemed to him a rather dreary thing. When we reached the monastery and I had asked my question about Nirvana, the monk defined it as a state where there is no more birth, old age, or death. The boy then added, of his own motion, that Nirvana is equivalent to being totally dead; that it is as if the death of the body ended it all — except, of course, that Nirvana can be attained only after a series of lives. When the monk learned what the boy had said he corrected him, insisting that we cannot possibly know so much as this. Nirvana, he added, may have a kind of consciousness, and may contain a great deal of which we are entirely ignorant and at which we cannot even guess. All we know is that it is the end of birth, old age, and death, the end of lust, ill-will, and ignorance. It

is like a house of which we see the outside only and not the inside. We know the way thither, but what is within we cannot tell. The boy was obviously much impressed by this view and said this was the first time he had ever heard such a description of Nirvana. On our walk back from the monastery he returned to the subject and dwelt upon it long and thoughtfully. The possibility that Nirvana might be in any sense conscious instead of blank non-existence came to him, he said, with unhoped-for comfort. Hitherto it had seemed to him (for so he had always been taught) that conscious existence inevitably involved suffering, and life had seemed to him necessarily melancholy. He had longed for Nirvana as complete cessation of existence and the only possible escape. But if conscious life was really possible without sorrow, he would welcome it eagerly. And he added, "The Lord Buddha must have known what was in Nirvana; and why did he not tell us? If he only had told us it would have made everything so much easier and life so much happier!" I did not venture to suggest that possibly the Lord Buddha himself did not know. I only pointed out that the teaching of Christianity was in some way similar to what the monk had said, and that it held out the hope of a continued existence of strenuous endeavor and achievement, free from most of the fetters that bind us here. The boy responded, "Christianity is certainly very much more comforting than Buddhism, and if I only could believe it true I would be glad to accept it. But the question is, *Is it true?*"

None of the Buddhists whom I questioned in either Burma or Ceylon had any hope of attaining to Nirvana in the next incarnation, and none of them except Mr. Dharmapala and his brother Mr. Hewavitarna (the leaders of the Maha-Bodhi movement) made any reference to the common view of the Pitakas that Nirvana may be attained in this life. Instead of adopting this orthodox Buddhist view the Burmese Buddhists put off the hour of the attainability of Nirvana to the indefinite distant future, and all my Ceylonese acquaintances, with the two exceptions named above, said very definitely that no man now living could attain to Nirvana before the coming of Maitreya Buddha — which some placed about twenty-five hundred years from now, and others at an indefinitely later

period. Mr. Kenneth Saunders, whose knowledge of both Singhalese and Burmese Buddhism is very extensive, testifies that he never met or heard of any Buddhist who expected to attain Nirvana in his next birth, and none of the respondents to his Ceylonese Questionnaire had ever heard of any. This is rather surprising considering the unmistakable teaching of the Pitakas that Nirvana is attainable in this life. Subhadra's "Catechism," which adopts this latter view, makes a distinction (based on the Pitakas) between the Nirvana which one may attain in this life, and the state which follows upon the death of one who has attained Nirvana, a state which it distinguishes by the name "Parinirvana." I shall close our discussion of this subject by three quotations from this authoritative little book:—

"Nirvana is a state of mind and heart in which all desire for life or annihilation, all egoistic craving has become extinct, and with every passion, every grasping desire, every fear, all ill-will, and every sorrow. It is a state of perfect inward peace, accompanied by the imperturbable certainty of having attained deliverance, a state words cannot describe, and which the imagination of the worldling tries in vain to picture to himself. Only one who has himself experienced it knows what Nirvana is."

"The individuality continues to appear in constantly recurring embodiments until perfect wisdom and moral purification, Nirvana, are attained. Then after the death of the last body it becomes totally extinct in Parinirvana." "Parinirvana, in the sense of other religions and of scientific materialism, is, indeed, total annihilation, complete dissolution of the individuality, for nothing remains in Parinirvana which in any way corresponds to the *human conception of existence.* But from the point of view of one who has attained to the state of the Araha [i.e., to Nirvana, in this life], it is rather the world with all its phenomena which is 'nothingness,' a reflected image, an iridescent bubble, a terrifying dream; and Parinirvana is the entrance into real existence, into the eternal, unchangeable, imperishable, where there is no diversity, no strife, and no suffering."

"It is not possible to form any idea of Parinirvana: it is

beyond all knowledge, beyond all conception. It cannot be said that it is or that it is not, because no forms of existence are applicable to Parinirvana. One can only say it is final emancipation, the complete extinction of individuality — eternal rest and peace. 'There is, O disciples, a state where there is neither earth nor water, neither air nor light, neither infinity of space nor infinity of time, neither any form of existence nor nothingness, neither perception nor non-perception, neither this world nor that world. There there is neither coming into existence nor decay, neither birth nor death, neither cause nor effect, neither change nor stability. There is, O disciples, an unborn, unoriginated, uncreated, unformed. Were there not, there would be no escape from the world of the born, originated, created, formed.' Thus sayeth the Master." [1]

Whatever this may mean, it is evident that the Buddha, who long ago passed into Parinirvana, is far removed from this world of ours, out of earshot of all our prayers, out of sight of all our offerings, and can neither influence us nor be influenced by us. As the monk in Galle put it, "Buddha finish." That being the case, the important and practical question arises, Of what use are worship, prayer, and offering?

Most Buddhist laymen, I suppose, have no answer to this question and no explicit theory about it. Their position is that of one of their number with whom I used to talk in Mandalay. He told me first that Buddha is in Nirvana and knows nothing of our prayers and praises. Then I asked him whether he prayed to Buddha for definite things, such as success in business, and he answered, Yes. I asked whether he thought these prayers were answered and he said he supposed so. When,

[1] Pages 22, 61, and 37 of the *Catechism*. I add here the definition of Nirvana given in Colonel Olcott's *Catechism* (p. 33): "Nirvana is a condition of total cessation of changes; of perfect rest: of the absence of desire and illusion and sorrow: of the total obliteration of everything that goes to make up the physical man."

Paul Carus's *Gospel of Buddha* does not seek, as the two *Catechisms* do, to give a systematic presentation of Buddhist doctrines, but (following the example of the evangelists rather than that of the Westminster divines) aims to present the teachings of the founder in his own words or in conscientious paraphrases of them. Hence from this textbook of Buddhism we get only the general teaching of Gautama himself, that Nirvana means "extinction of illusion," etc., and beyond that only silence on the question whether it is a final extinction of personality.

then, I asked how he could make this consistent with his view of the inaccessibility of Buddha, and how he accounted for the effectiveness of his prayers, he said he did n't know. He saw the inconsistency plainly, and said his prayers were not due to any theory on the subject, but merely to a habit which he had acquired in childhood, from his parents.

Buddhists less learned in their religion than he, of course, have no such logical difficulties to face. Those who regard the Buddha practically as a god, living in heaven and hearing prayer, naturally pray to him. And this I may call the first of three theories of prayer which one finds implicit among the Buddhists. The almost irrepressible human demand for help when human help fails forces many a Buddhist to turn in prayer to the Blessed One, even if he has learned from some monk that petition to the Buddha is vain. Fielding Hall reports such a prayer bursting from the heart of a mother for the recovery of her first born. And Saunders, in reporting the answers to his Ceylonese Questionnaire, says of the Singhalese women: "It is they who frequent the temples, coming with simple offerings of flowers and a pathetic wish or prayer, 'May I be born beautiful as these in my next life!' Or one may be seen offering strands of her hair and ejaculating, 'May I be born with hair long and lustrous!' Or again a pregnant woman will offer white or yellow flowers hoping to have a fair child." [1]

Those who accept the doctrine that petitions to the Buddha are useless are not, however, thereby deprived of the use of prayer. For the nats or devatas stand always ready, and they are easily to be influenced by petitions and promises. For this reason some of these lower beings assume in the worship of a large part of the laity a much more important position than the Buddha himself. It is the old story of the "high gods of low peoples" to which Andrew Lang and others have drawn attention. The shrine of the deva of Adams Peak is much more popular than that of the Buddha on its summit: for the deva, as every one knows, can hear and answer prayer and may be influenced by the promise of an offering, not to say a bribe; whereas the Buddha — he is in Nirvana! Nor is it the ignorant layman alone who makes prayers and offerings to the lower

[1] *Buddhist Ideals*, Appendix, p. 134.

spirits. Several of the monks of my acquaintance do the same, and the learned monk I found in the Galle Vihara told me of the most approved way of doing it. One makes a request to the deva and promises that if it is granted an offering will be made to the Buddha and the merit from this offering will be handed over to the deva — for devas are in as great need of merit as we, and merit (as we shall see) is transferable. This, the monk assured me, however, was not to be regarded as *religion*, but merely as *business*. It was, he said, like making a contract with Government. Religion has to do with the Teacher.

The strictly logical Buddhist view, of course, makes petitional prayer quite useless. And this is what we may call the second theory. Gautama himself held this view, and in illustration of it once said to a Brahmin: "What would you think if this stream were swollen up to the edge and a man whose business called him to the other side came up here and shouted out: 'Come over here, O thou other shore! Come over to my side!' What would you think? Would all his calling and praying and beseeching and hoping bring over to him here that other shore? Even like this man are you Brahmins when ye say: 'Indra, we call to Thee! Soma, Varuna, Brahman, we call to Thee!'"[1] In similar vein a monk in the Gangarama Vihara, near Kandy, said to me: "You Christians believe in '*God*' and pray to him. That is like children crying out in a storm. You are trusting to something you know nothing about. We Buddhists do nothing of the kind, — we rely on ourselves alone."

This second, and logical, Buddhist view of prayer, of course, does away only with *petition:* other forms of worship are regularly practiced — and consistently — by the most logical monks. They make no prayers in the sense of petitions, but they recite every day certain texts of praise to the Buddha and of consecration of themselves. With a few these praises are genuine outbursts of gratitude to the Great Teacher, long since passed away, who showed the Path of Escape from sorrow. But this spontaneous outburst of gratitude is probably very uncommon. The whole Buddhist training is against impulse and cultivates a colder and more reasoning action. Most of

[1] Quoted by Dahlke, *Buddhist Essays* (London, Macmillan, 1908), p. 142.

those who accept what I call the second theory of prayer perform their worship for a very definite reason. They do it (and this is an interesting point) consciously and deliberately for the sake of its good subjective effects upon themselves. A monk in Rangoon said to me, "Prayer and offering are not received by the Buddha in the sense that they have any effect upon him, nor in the sense of being means of procuring anything from him. Their value is subjective purely. A prayer for purity or peace is likely to bring about its own fulfillment, especially if accompanied by the thought of the Buddha as our ideal. The Buddha, indeed, is for our practical purposes quite dead, but he is the ideal of what humanity might be and of what each one of us ought to be. Thus prayer for the enlightened Buddhist is not supplication, but mental discipline." [1]

In like manner the offerings which the strictly logical Buddhist makes are in part performed out of gratitude to the Master and as a mark of honor to him, just as we put flowers, year after year, on the graves of those we have loved long ago; in part the offerings like the "prayers" are made for their subjective effect upon the worshiper and upon all those who see them. This is particularly true of flowers. Flowers are used not merely for the sake of their beauty as a gift on the shrine of the Blessed One. Their fading in the shrine and the subsequent necessity of casting them out to wither and disintegrate is an integral part of the ceremony and one of the aims of the offering. For this should keep the worshiper ever in mind of the fact that as these beautiful and fragrant flowers wither, so must his body and the most beautiful human bodies die and decay, in this world where all is transitory.

But there is a third theory of prayer and offering which is a compromise between the two others, and which is interesting as being particularly Buddhistic. It is a kind of extension of

[1] In this connection it is interesting to note that the two "prayers" which all Buddhists are supposed to recite at daybreak and bed-time every day are the "Refuge" and the "Five Precepts" (see pp. 345 and 348 above.) Although these are recited in Pali, their meaning, according to Mr. Maung Tha Kin, is pretty generally understood by the common people. Hence we may suppose that the recitation, especially of the Five Precepts, exerts some real moral influence upon the life of the modern Buddhist. See Mr. Kin's paper on "The Profession of Faith" in the *Buddhist Review* for April–June, 1915.

the subjective view of prayer — an effort to retain the subjective view and at the same time get the advantages of the objective view by applying ethical and psychological categories to the universe. The monk in Rangoon said to me: "An intense wish, when accompanied by an offering or by merit of any kind, will tend to bring about its own satisfaction, — either in this life or in another. This is plainly true of spiritual things — as the desire for purity or peace. But it is also true of physical and worldly things. Thus, if I desire wealth and pray for it, accompanying my prayer with an offering to the Buddha (for this is a way of acquiring merit), my desire is likely to be satisfied in this life or another."

I think this theory of prayer is the one most commonly held by the intelligent monk. The Buddhist is persuaded that this is essentially a moral universe; a universe in which the law of Karma — which is a moral rather than a merely physical law — reigns supreme. A good act, he is persuaded, can never fail of its reward, nor an evil one of its punishment — except, of course, in the sense that the two may balance each other as debits and credits in the cash account of the universe. He is certain that the Buddha cannot hear or answer prayer, yet, on the other hand, he is equally sure that prayer and offering to the Buddha are infallible means of acquiring merit and will be imputed to him for righteousness, and that this righteousness can in no wise lose its reward. Hence the prayer or recitation of the sacred text must have a value and a power of its own; it must work automatically and start forces going in the universe which will in their own good time have the desired effect upon his destiny.

It may very well seem odd to the reader that, in all these pages which I have already devoted to Buddhism, not a word has been said of what undoubtedly is the very heart of the Buddha's teaching — the "Four Noble Truths" of sorrow and salvation. This omission, or rather delay, has been quite intentional; for the Four Noble Truths, though fundamental in the philosophy of Buddhism, play a less important part in the religion of the people than do prayers and offerings, hopes and moral customs. But the Four Noble Truths are of great indirect importance even to the popular religion, and must be

dealt with carefully before we can understand Buddhism or form a just opinion as to its value.

The First Noble Truth was expressed by Gautama himself in the following words: "Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering: painful is it to be joined to that which we do not like: painful is separation from that which we do like. In brief: all the five *Aspects of Existence* are suffering." [1] The repeated emphasis laid upon the fact of suffering in the discourses of the Buddha, and the fidelity with which his teaching of it has been handed on and imitated, have given Buddhism the reputation of being the most pessimistic of religions. Buddhists who read European books on their religion are becoming to-day very sensitive, not to say *touchy*, on this subject. You may criticize Buddhism to a Buddhist on other points, but it is best not to tell him that his religion is pessimistic. Buddhism, we are assured, is in truth the most *optimistic* of religions. It merely points out the undoubted facts of sorrow which every religion and every philosophy must recognize, and then it goes on to show the way of escape. I cull the following sentences from an article in the "Buddhist Review" for June, 1912, entitled "The Optimism of Buddhism": "Buddhism recognizes sorrow, recognizes evil, but it does not say, 'Blessed are the sorrowful.' It teaches that sorrow and evil are things to be recognized, but also to be grappled with and escaped from. It does not teach that man is but a worm, that his troubles and trials are a rod sent for the purposes of chastisement and that if he would know true happiness he must kiss the rod. . . . Buddhism is a religion not of passivity but of activity, and it is a continual endeavor to escape from evil. . . . Buddhism is opposed to pessimism, the gospel of feebleness and failure, at every step of the way." [2]

All this is undoubtedly true. Buddhism recognizes the evils of life only that it may arouse us to save ourselves from them. It is a religion of activity and effort and courage, not one of weakness and surrender. And yet it must be admitted that there is more ground for the common view of the pessimistic

[1] From Sutta 22 of the Digha Nikaya.

[2] See also another article to the same effect by "Captain Enriquez, F.R.G.S.," in the *Buddhist Review* for December, 1914.

nature of Buddhism than the above quotation would imply. Buddhism is founded upon a recognition of the sorrows of life in a way that no other religion is.[1] It was not by chance, but as a result of very logical thinking, that the Buddha began his first sermon — and many another sermon — with the Noble Truth of Suffering which I have quoted above. It is necessary to realize that life is very evil — much more evil than good — if you are to be converted to Buddhism. This is fundamental, for without this realization you will have no wish for the salvation which the Buddha offers. "One thing only," said he to his disciples, — "one thing only do I make known: suffering and deliverance from suffering." And a recent writer in the "Buddhist Review" adds: "The question of deliverance from suffering seems to the Buddha of such great, of such commanding importance for the welfare of all beings that, in the last analysis, he considers this problem the only one really worthy of solution." [2]

And this view of the sorrow of life is so fundamental in the Buddha's teaching that it has colored the professional Buddhist world. Nearly all the monks with whom I talked assured me that life was very dreary and existence necessarily sorrowful, and that they would like to be rid of it and enter Nirvana. When it is remembered that a large proportion of these monks consider Nirvana to be equivalent to absolute death, it will be seen that their view of life is hardly optimistic. The confession of the boy in Rangoon concerning his views of life and Nirvana, recited a few pages back, should be recalled in this connection. Neither the Burmese nor the Singhalese are naturally a melancholy race, but the monks have learned from Buddhism that they should at least try to regard the world as

[1] One of the most enthusiastic of Buddhist converts, Paul Dahlke, writes: "For the Buddhist, the highest is something quite different from what it is for the adherent of another religion. The Buddhist's goal is not heaven, union with any deity; it is freedom from pain. Only in Buddhism does the conception of freedom from pain remain purely a negative thing. Buddhism is the only one among all the religions of the world that is based upon negation, yea, *is* negation. Hence it has value solely for such as seek the door out of life: in fact, Buddhism is nothing else but the way to this door." (*Buddhist Essays*, pp. 47–48.)

[2] Nyana Tiloka, "The Quintessence of Buddhism," *Buddhist Review* for January, 1914.

bad and its pleasures worthless and cultivate a taste for Nirvana. An interesting light was shed on the matter for me by one of the Mandalay monks, who, when I asked whether he really thought life so very evil and really longed for the non-existence of Nirvana, replied: "Yes, I do during meditation. I then realize the evil of life and long to be free of it. But at other times, — when conversing or eating, for instance, — I forget what I realized in meditation. At such times life seems good and I don't want to give it up; and so for a time I become a bad Buddhist."

Buddhism differs from other religions in its view of life, not in recognizing the presence of evil, but in insisting that all change and impermanence are evil, and that therefore our changing existence is necessarily and thoroughly bad. Not only is sorrow bad in itself, but pleasure is not really good, even while it lasts, because it cannot last forever. It ends in sorrow and life ends in death. He who is a mere creature of circumstance, passing from temporary pleasure to loss and grief, tossed about at the mercy of his emotions and never the master of them, is surely a pitiful figure. Is there no refuge from sorrow that one can *count* on; no method of escape that depends not on external chance but on ourselves?

The Buddha goes at the question as no other founder of a religion ever did. His method and spirit are essentially scientific. He appeals to no supernatural power, and makes use of no blind faith. Instead of this he asks first of all, What are the symptoms of our common disease? and secondly, What is the cause of these symptoms? And the answer to this second question he announces in the Second Noble Truth. The cause of suffering is always *desire*. We are unhappy because we have not got — and cannot get — what we want. There is no doubt that this conclusion of his was at first an empirical judgment, and that in a very great many cases it can be tested and verified by an appeal to experience. But experience cannot verify it in all cases. How, for instance, shall I explain an inherited and painful disease as the result of desire? If, indeed, I could cease to desire to get rid of pain, pain would cease to be an evil. But even so the pain antedated the desire, hence cannot have been caused by it. Yet Gautama believed that his formula

would apply to such cases as this also, and that even here desire was the ultimate cause of the pain. The disease, he said, is due to the man's desire and ignorance in a previous existence. Thus, without realizing the fact, he mingled an adopted Brahmanical belief with his own empirical discovery.

The Third Noble Truth makes the obvious application of the second — namely, that by overcoming desire we may avoid sorrow — and extends this obvious application by asserting (again in part upon the strength of the prevalent Indian doctrine of Karma) that continued rebirth may be prevented by killing out the will-to-live, which is at the basis of all our ills. The most important part of the Buddha's doctrine, however, was always that relating to this life, and based upon his own empirical discovery. "The Bhagava has well preached the Dhamma, productive of immediate results *in this life*, of immediate results that can be pointed out to any one by asking him to come and see." [1]

The method by which we may kill out desire and the will-to-live, and rid ourselves of the three great fetters of lust, anger, and spiritual blindness, is given in detail in the Fourth Noble Truth, called also the Noble Eightfold Path. This is in fact a method of mental training, a systematic manner of life which if diligently followed will gradually weed out the worldly wishes, and substitute for the hot desire after personal enjoyment the calm, self-possessed character of the man who is his own master and may laugh at Fate, just because he has learned to despise all the slings and arrows of outrageous Fortune.

This is the Buddhist method of salvation; this was the Buddha's great discovery. He came to it, a Buddhist friend of mine suggests, by a knowledge of child psychology. For years he had been searching for peace and freedom from the power of fortune. He had tried religion with its ceremonies and prayers and faith, he had tried philosophy, and he had tried asceticism. All had failed. Then, casting his thoughts back over the course of his life, he asked himself when in the whole of it he had been really without care. And he saw that his one really free and happy time had been as a young child. Then, analyzing out of the child's mental condition that element

[1] Anguttara Nikaya, III, II, 40.

which determined its freedom from care, he saw that this was its lack of self-consciousness and individuality. The baby does not say, "This is mine! I own that! I plan thus and so!" And hence it is at peace.

Whether the Buddha ever went through any such course of thought as my friend suggests, he certainly believed — as his orthodox followers do to-day — that the obstacle to real self-mastery and perfect peace, as well as the source of most sorrow and most sin, is to be found in the over-emphasis upon the ego. " 'T is self whereby we suffer."[1] The man who has learned to deny himself, to put aside all egoistic aims, and to look down upon all personal pleasures, is the man who may snap his fingers at Fate, because he has found a peace which the world can never give nor take away. "To understand that, after all, it is the individuality, with its wants and desires opposed to those of other individualities, which causes all suffering in the world, that therefore the striving for individual happiness is according to its very nature wrong, and that it is best to relinquish it voluntarily — that is to take a great step, yea, the greatest, on the road to true knowledge."[2] "The craving for life is the worst of all diseases," says the Dhammapada, "individuality is the greatest of all evils. He who knows this truly sees in Nirvana the highest bliss." It was for this reason that the Buddha laid so much stress on what would seem a purely academic question, the non-existence of a substantial self. The self we love in self-love is only a delusion, and from this delusion, this ignorance, springs all our woe. He whose eyes have been opened to the truth sees that the so-called "self" is a mere stream of passing and perishing psycho-physical phenomena; and there being for him no more delusion of self, all selfish interests with their feverish brood of desires, disappointments, sins, and sorrows vanish away, and only the great Peace, with its new kind of joy that cannot wane, is left behind.

It will thus be evident that the salvation which the Buddha offers is different in kind from that which the followers of most other religions seek after. It is not a life of happiness in

[1] Cf. Rhys-Davids's admirable adaptation of Symonds's lines, in *Buddhism* (American Lectures, Putnam, 1904), p. 152.

[2] Subhadra Bhikshu's *Buddhist Catechism*, p. 69.

some distant heaven that we are to go to after we die; it is a new character that may be won here and now. We all know the two types of people whom the Buddha would recognize as the lost and the saved. One clings to life and its pleasure, hot with desires, lusting and robust, perhaps, or it may be even sickly, but always desiring, greedy of good things, filled with will and self-assertion; the other quiet, seeking little or nothing, ready for anything, with no intense pains, pleasures, or longings, neither wishing for life nor fearing death. To change from the first type to the second is the Buddha's way of salvation. And it is not merely the *way* of salvation: it is salvation itself. The new character acquired through the long course of self-training outlined in the Noble Eightfold Path means peace and freedom from care and an equipoise of mind which bid defiance to the thousand frets of ordinary life. Gautama may be said to have anticipated the "Don't worry cure": and his message and method might come as a great boon to our hustling and neurotic age. The common expression, "Blessed be nothing," the Buddha meant quite literally. If you have nothing and want nothing you will be blessed. For sorrow comes just from having and wanting. In all literalness, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Buddhist Nirvana. But if you give up all your possessions and all thought of ever having any and cut all the ties that bind you to this world, there will be little left to sorrow or worry over. Don't be afraid, says the Buddha, for there is really nothing worth fearing. The only thing worthy of fear is slavery; and you may break your own bonds if you only will.

"In him who has intercourse with others affections arise, and then the pain which follows affection: considering the misery that originates in affection, let one wander alone like a rhinoceros.

"Seeing bright golden bracelets, well-wrought by the goldsmith, striking against each other when there are two on one arm, let one wander alone like a rhinoceros.

"Thus, if I join myself with another I shall swear or scold: considering this danger in future, let one wander alone like a rhinoceros.

"The sensual pleasures, indeed, which are various, sweet, charming, under their different shapes agitate the mind: seeing the misery originating in sensual pleasures, let one wander alone like a rhinoceros.

"Without covetousness, without deceit, without craving, without distractions, having got rid of passion and folly, being free from desire in all the world, let one wander alone like a rhinoceros.

"Not adorning himself, not looking out for sport, amusement, and the delight of pleasure in the world, being loath of a life of dressing, speaking the truth, let one wander alone like a rhinoceros.

"Having left son and wife, father and mother, wealth and corn and relatives and the different objects of desire, let one wander alone like a rhinoceros.

"Like a lion not trembling at noises, like the wind not caught in a net, like a lotus not stained by water, let one wander alone like a rhinoceros." [1]

There is much that is fine in this ideal; and I for one can seldom write or speak of it without catching some of the Buddhist's enthusiasm. But we must be serious with it and not blink its implications. One cannot wander alone like a rhinoceros and at the same time bide at home and act as beast of burden for the world. The ties that bind man most closely and that lay him most open to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, are often not his pleasant vices and his selfish wishes, but his family, his friends, his country, the cause which he serves. Gautama named his only child "Rahula" — a *fetter;* and in the Dhammapada he is reported to have said: "The wise man does not regard chains or ropes as fetters, but riches, honor, wife and child, — all that draws him down to a worldly life. Therefore he leaves all these with their sorrows and joys and goes forth into solitude." A monk near Kandy who was very learned in his religion said to my wife: "I have a mother and father, brothers and sisters, but I leave them all to themselves so as to think only of my salvation. I have to think of my salvation only and not of other people's. You have a mother and father, brothers and sisters? Leave them all to

[1] The Sutta Nipata (translated by Fausböll) III. S.B.E., vol. x. (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1881.)

themselves, do not think about them, but think only of your own salvation. They are ties that bind you to this world." That this was the point of view of many of the early monks comes out plainly in Mrs. Rhys-Davids's recent translation of the Theregathas. Many of the monks who composed these interesting "Psalms" glory in the fact that they have deserted their wives and children in order to win peace for themselves. And one of them writes thus: "I have vomited forth all desires, loves, hates, and things of beauty. For no one else have I done this: it is only for myself I acted thus." [1]

I do not think that Gautama would have approved of these monks, modern and ancient; but I think their attitude is quite consistent with this part of his teaching. Give no pledges to Fortune is the essence of it. And from this it must inevitably follow that it is folly to adopt the interests of others in such fashion as ever to be in danger of sharing in their grief or caring for their loss. Desire is the cause of sorrow and deliverance from sorrow is the great aim. The wise man may be helpful to others, — *should* be helpful, for thus he will acquire merit for himself, — but he will keep his distance and never allow his affections to become involved nor imperil his peace by sharing their interests. He will retain always the stoical attitude of mind. He may enter into various helpful activities and have various relations with his fellows, but he will do this in such fashion as always to be able to take philosophically whatever happens. He must never love in such a way as to be disturbed by the death or the misery of the loved one. He may participate in a great cause, but only on condition of retaining complete indifference to its success or failure. Indifference and detachment are his great sources of strength and his never-failing armor against sorrow. "Ascending the high tower of wisdom, the wise man gazes sorrowless upon the sorrowing crowd below; wise himself, he looks upon the fools as one on a mountain-peak upon dwellers in the valley. . . . O joy, in joy we dwell amongst the sickly full of health. In very bliss we dwell serene amidst the careworn." [2]

[1] *Psalms of the Early Buddhists.* Part II, *Psalms of the Brethren.* (Oxford, 1913.)

[2] Dhammapada, 28, 198, 199. My quotations from the Dhammapada

There is thus something unquestionably selfish about Buddhist salvation. Against selfishness of the cruder type Buddhism makes unending war; yet this war is prompted by another and subtler kind of selfishness. It denies the existence of the ego, yet its motive force in seeking release from the world is a kind of enlightened egoism.

But if I should stop here I should do Buddhism great injustice. For Buddhism teaches a *genuine* unselfishness and self-forgetfulness with no *arrière pensée* of the main chance in this world or any other. And more important still, this teaching is illustrated by one of the most noble, perfect, and long-continued examples of unselfish service that history and tradition have to record. Whatever we are to think of the assertion in the sacred books that, immediately upon his enlightenment, the Evil One tempted Gautama to enter at once into Nirvana taking his new-won insight with him, and that the Blessed One preferred to defer Nirvana and its joys for many weary years, so that he might instead return to this sad world and give his message to mankind, certain it is that he spent the remainder of his days in loving service to all within his reach and with no thought of reward or escape from sorrow on his part. Jesus' life lasted thirty-three years and his active teaching-mission only three; but for upwards of forty-five years the Buddha was laboring at the spread of his gospel of peace, and when his hair was white and his eyes were dim and his back was bent with the weight of eighty years, he was still plodding on over the dusty plains of India, eager as ever to save one more soul from the burden of sin and sorrow. The traditions of the Master may not be accepted in their details, but there can be no doubt that we have the very spirit of the man and the ideal which he most earnestly inculcated upon his followers in the saying that he could look back over five hundred previous births, and that in each one of them he had given up his life for the benefit of some other creature. And his teaching no less than his practice expresses this all-absorbing love. I cannot

are usually taken either from Max Müller's translation (S.B.E., vol. x) or from the translation by Wagiswara and Saunders (*The Buddha's Way of Virtue*, New York, Dutton, 1912); though sometimes I have availed myself of versions by other scholars.

here refrain from quoting again his great command to his disciples: "Go ye, O Bhikkhus," the Vinaya Pitaka reports him as saying, — "go ye and wander forth for the gain of the many, the welfare of the many, in compassion for the world, for the good, for the gain, for the welfare of gods and men. Proclaim, O Bhikkhus, the doctrine glorious, preach ye a life of holiness, perfect and pure."

How can we reconcile this teaching and this example of the Buddha with his doctrine of salvation from sorrow? In truth I do not think we can. The two views are essentially irreconcilable. And it is their innate irreconcilability and at the same time their inextricable interweaving throughout the teachings of Buddhism that make the philosophy of Buddhism so difficult to grasp. In a long discussion with a most able Buddhist thinker I once pointed out this inconsistency in Buddhist doctrine and at length made him see and even admit it. And then he quoted and translated to me some Pali verses in which Gautama says of his doctrine that it is deep, hard to be understood, and *not logical*. There are, in fact, as it seems to me, three distinct elements in Buddhism which originated quite independently, but which have been interwoven in such fashion that it is extremely difficult to distinguish them. One of these is the Brahmanical, — the set of beliefs which Gautama either took for granted from the common beliefs of his time, or adopted into his teaching as a kind of recognition of the weakness of the flesh in his disciples. The great example of the former of these is the belief in rebirth and Karma, which he himself accepted and made much of. The various teachings about heaven and hell, the acquisition of merit and the value of various external acts, — these very likely appealed less to Gautama than to his followers. But in any case they were simply adopted from Brahmanism and became intertwined more or less closely with what may be called the second element in Buddhism — namely, Gautama's own original doctrine, the Four Noble Truths, based upon direct experience of sorrow, sorrow's cause, and the purely psychical way of escape. Besides these two elements there was a third, namely, Gautama's own great sympathetic heart, his unselfish devotion and desire to serve and save his fellows. The attempt is usually made to

expound Buddhism as if all of it followed from the Four Noble Truths. To do this successfully is really impossible, because much that is of importance in Buddhist morality and philosophy comes from the two other sources. Thus, for example, how is the First Precept — not to kill — to be derived from the enlightened egoism of the Four Noble Truths? There is no reason why one who has broken all the bonds, including human sympathy, should not take life with impunity. The real basis for this precept is to be found in Buddha's wide-reaching love for all sentient creatures, combined with the general Indian belief in future existence and the acquisition of merit.[1] Further examples of this inconsistency might be given, and even instances in which the logical consequences of the Four Noble Truths are *at war* with the real desire for service which characterized not only the Buddha but many of his disciples. The first great outbreak of this smouldering inconsistency came when Northern Buddhism gave up as its ideal the Arahat who attains and enters Nirvana, and substituted for him the Bodhisat who deliberately surrenders Nirvana in order to be reborn endlessly and serve his fellows. The same struggle between the two inconsistent ideals within Buddhism is flaming out again to-day, the monks holding to the egoistic aim, the new movement of reform among the laymen holding up the ideal of service. The monks have the advantage of overwhelming numbers; but the reformers have the newer spirit of the age upon their side. The outcome of the struggle will be decisive for Buddhism. For no man and no religion can permanently serve two masters.

[1] In fact this exact precept of "ahimsa" (harmlessness) is to be found in the Brahmanical literature of Gautama's time.

CHAPTER XIX

THE VALUE OF BUDDHISM AND ITS SPRINGS OF POWER

IT is always very much easier for the theologian to estimate the value of a given religion than for the psychologist or historian. The problem for the former is simple: he has only to analyze the beliefs of the religion in question, compare them with the doctrines of his own authoritative and infallible creed, and so point out its grain of truth and its mass of error. The student of the history or of the psychology of religion is unable to do this, because he is not in possession of any such infallible and authoritative creed. Hence, much as he may envy and admire the theologian, he is forced to follow a humbler and more difficult method. What, he must first ask himself, are the values of religion in general which a merely human science can verify? And secondly, How far does the religion in question possess these values? The writer of this book is unfortunately no theologian, and in seeking to estimate the value of Buddhism will be forced to fall back on the more complex and less ambitious method of the psychologist of religion. Hence the only results he can hope to attain will not only be forever open to correction, but even if accepted as true will possess merely secondary importance. For the questions with which this chapter is to deal have to do not with the transcendental truth of Buddhism, but only with its human and humanly verifiable values.

What, then, are the values of religion from a merely psychological point of view? Various analyses of them might be made, but for our purposes perhaps the simplest and most useful classification may be based upon and derived from the classic division of mental powers into knowing, feeling, and willing. Religion, since (as a psychological phenomenon) it involves the whole mind and is not confined to any one division of it, must have to do with all three of these. And the value of any given religion may be judged, from the psycholo-

gist's point of view, by the question, How is it related to human knowledge, to human happiness, and to human conduct?

What, then, first of all, are the bearings of Buddhism on human knowledge, such as science and history? How far are its teachings in conformity with known truth, and what is its relation to the discovery of further truth? The question is extremely complicated, but we shall simplify it to a considerable extent if we abstract from the various modifications that the teaching of the Buddha has undergone and confine our attention to the Buddhism of the ancient sacred books, — i.e., to the teachings of Gautama himself so far as they are reported.

The most obvious and most striking characteristic of Buddhism in its relation to science is the extreme openness of mind that follows necessarily from the Buddhist position. The Buddhist has no infallible authority which must be consulted before he may listen to the scientist. He has no pope who may make definitions *ex cathedra* of faith and morals, no church councils with power to decree the truth, no supernaturally inspired book that cannot err. If he remains faithful to the spirit and admonitions of the Buddha, he has but one guide, which he must always follow no matter where she leads; and this guide is his own reason. A searcher after truth, named Kesaputto, once came to the Buddha and said: "Master, every priest and monk extols his belief as the only true one and condemns that of others as false. I am troubled by doubts. I do not know whom to believe." The Buddha answered: "Thy doubts are well founded, O Kesaputto. Listen well to my words: Do not believe anything on mere hearsay; do not believe traditions because they are old and handed down through many generations; do not believe anything on account of rumors or because people talk much about it; do not believe simply because the written testimony of some ancient sage is shown to thee; never believe anything because presumption is in its favor, or because the custom of many years leads thee to regard it as true; do not believe anything on the mere authority of thy teachers or priests. Whatever according to thine own experience and after thorough investigation agrees with thy reason,

and is conducive to thine own weal and to that of all other living beings, *that* accept as truth and live accordingly." [1]

This absolute reliance on reason and experience, coupled with a complete disregard for mere authority, is characteristic of all Gautama's teaching. There is a modern note in his words and his attitude that comes to us through these twenty-five hundred years with something like a shock of surprise and which differentiates his religion from all others. He alone of founders and prophets turned away from all supernatural sources of knowledge and attempted *to think the thing out for himself*, and to recommend his doctrine to others only because it was *scientifically verifiable by an appeal to experience.*

This was possible to him in part because his teaching had nothing to say of the hypothesis of a personal Creator or a personal Providence. How the world came into being was not his problem, and he insistently refused to commit himself upon it. And this atheism, this lack of the mystical element in his religion, which has been so long used as a reproach to it, has become to-day a further recommendation in the eyes of many a modern thinker. For science is atheistic in exactly the same sense as is Buddhism. Neither of them pretends to know how the world came into being; both are agnostic and silent on this point. And both turn away from ultimate problems like this to center their attention, in positivist fashion, on the phenomenal world, the world that is verifiable in human experience and has direct and obvious bearing upon human actions and human weal and woe. If a supernatural realm exists, science cannot see it, and the Buddha (when we confine our attention to the purest form of his doctrine) *will* not see it. When urged by one of his followers to perform a miracle in order to convert certain non-believers, the Buddha replied: "I despise and reject the miracles of magic power and divination. I and my disciples gain adherents only by the miracle of instruction." [2]

The parenthetical clause which I inserted above is of some importance. We may say that Buddhism makes no appeal

[1] Anguttara Nikaya, quoted in Subhadra's *Buddhist Catechism.*

[2] From the Digha Nikaya, quoted on page 71 of the *Buddhist Catechism.* One should add, however, that the Buddhist books are full of miraculous happenings and picture the Buddha as believing himself and his followers to be in possession of marvelous powers.

to miraculous agencies, superstition, and mythology; but we may say this provided only we confine our attention to the purest form of Buddhist doctrine. If we take the Buddhism of the Pitakas as a whole, we shall find this pure doctrine interwoven with as large a growth of supernatural stories and fanciful science as is to be found in most other religions. And even if we take refuge in so modern and generally accepted a book as Colonel Olcott's "Catechism," we shall find most of Part V given over to a defense of the "occult" in Buddhist legend and a (successful) attempt to show that all the miracles and wonders of Buddhism are in accord with "modern science." It is needless to add that the "modern science" to which the Colonel makes appeal is of the usual Theosophical variety. Hence, here again it is extremely important to distinguish clearly the three elements of Buddhism pointed out in the last chapter. If we confine our attention to those teachings which come from the Four Noble Truths or from Buddha's love for his fellows, we shall be in no danger of getting involved in the magical and fanciful. But a large part of the teachings of the Pitakas comes from what I have called the Brahmanical source; and the most enthusiastic Buddhist apologist will be unable to deny that this contains much that is unscientific if not highly fanciful. All the supernatural part of the Pitakas is, indeed, taken only symbolically today by modern Buddhists of Western education; and it is quite probable that Gautama would thoroughly approve of their actions. These supernatural tales sprang up out of the popular soil in which Buddhism grew, and have clung about the story of the Master's birth and life quite naturally and inevitably: but they are altogether distinct and very different in tone from those teachings of the sacred books which most clearly came from him. Hence we shall be justified in abstracting from them altogether in our efforts to get at the real essence of Buddhism. But unfortunately by no means all the teachings of the Pitakas which are out of harmony with modern science can be so easily disposed of. Gautama certainly had a science of his own which he took from the Indian science of his day and wove into his system. What are we to do with this? Take, for instance, Buddhist cosmology with its many Kalpas,

its long periods of degeneration and its rhythmically recurring destructions and regrowths of the world. It is evident that the Buddha believed in this or something very like it. Or, more important still, take Buddhist psychology. Every modern Buddhist will tell you (and I quote the words of one) that "Buddha was the Supreme Master of psychology." [1] Are we, then, to accept his psychology with its five "Khandas" (body, sensation, perception, discrimination, and consciousness); its list of sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and *mind*); its twelve "Nidanas," and all its other details, taken over as they were from the psychology of 600 B.C.? [2] One must, in short, take this question seriously. It is easy to say that the Buddha is the supreme master of psychology; but if one adopts his psychology one must reject modern psychology. One cannot play fast and loose with these things, and run with the hounds and with the hares at the same time.

It is possible, of course, to reject the Buddha's cosmology and his psychology, together with the supernatural references of the Pitakas; but even after this one will still find on one's hands a large part of the Buddha's inheritance from Brahmanism of which it will not be so easy to get rid, because it is more intimately interwoven with the rest of his teaching. What, for instance, shall one say of rebirth, Karma, "Parinirvana," the imperishable nature of "merit," and inevitable retribution for all deeds according to their moral quality? These beliefs, let us admit, are on a different footing from

[1] *The Maha Bodhi and United Buddhist World*, for February, 1914.

[2] Psychology has an unusually important place in the theory of Buddhism and permeates a large part of its literature. In some Buddhist psychology there is a good deal of insight into the life of the mind. Perhaps its chief interest for the Western psychologist is to be found in its classifications and divisions of mental phenomena, so strikingly different from our own. Buddhist psychology is very technical, and great importance is given to exact terminology; a Buddhist psychologist will usually refuse to discuss psychological questions with you at all unless you adopt his terms and categories. But in spite of their careful distinctions Buddhists never seem able to distinguish sharply between psychology, metaphysics, and ethics, the two latter being usually mixed up in all their treatments of mental phenomena. The reader will find a good deal of psychology in nearly all their sacred books and in the treatises of their scholars. A handy little work on the subject is Mrs. Rhys-Davids's *Buddhist Psychology* (London, Bell & Sons, 1914).

those mentioned above. They are not inconsistent — or at least not so obviously inconsistent — with modern science. It is quite possible that they are true, and they involve a faith in the moral nature of the universe which is very noble. But are they scientific and verifiable? To judge by the writings of many modern Buddhist apologists — especially Western Pali scholars who have given up Christianity and like to call themselves Buddhists — one would suppose that among other advantages over Christianity, Islam, and the rest, Buddhism alone among religions possesses no metaphysical postulates, makes no appeal to blind faith, and is altogether verifiable. Paul Dahlke, for instance, writes: —

"In religions founded upon a revelation, belief in certain supernatural occurrences is indispensable for one to be able truly to call one's self an adherent of the religion. Hence if my understanding will not permit me to accept the dogmas of Christianity, — if the pains with which it threatens and the problems with which it seeks to allure are to me empty words, then, in spite of the strictest obedience of the behests of morality, I am not a Christian. . . . On the other hand, it is not necessary to believe in order to be a Buddhist. Here belief is dethroned and replaced by knowledge and by understanding. . . . In Buddhism faith is purely the product of knowledge: it is mathematical certainty pure and simple." [1]

It would be interesting to see how the doctrine of rebirth would fare if "belief" were to be altogether "dethroned and replaced by knowledge and by understanding"; and to learn how the absolute justice of Karma is to be demonstrated as a "mathematical certainty pure and simple." Or what shall we say of such a universally accepted Buddhist belief as the following: "The unsatisfied desire for things that belong to the state of personal existence in the material world is a force and has creative power in itself so strong that it draws the being back into mundane life." [2] Is this a fact of science which has been verified? Does its acceptance demand nothing in the nature of faith?

It is, of course, natural that those born and brought up in Buddhist lands should take beliefs such as these quite for

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 44–45. [2] Colonel Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism.*

granted and should hardly think of questioning or analyzing them. But it is a little odd to see Europeans, trained in Western modes of thought, renouncing Christianity for Buddhism and proclaiming that they do so because Buddhism requires no faith. As a matter of fact, they are not exchanging belief for "mathematical certainty"; they are giving up faith in the cosmology of the Hebrews in the first century of our era only to substitute for it a faith in the cosmology of the Hindus in the sixth century B.C.

After all this has been said, however, it must be admitted that Buddhism occupies a peculiarly favorable position in relation to modern science and the advance of thought and knowledge generally. This is due to its fundamental principles already cited, which make reason and verifiable experience supreme, and authority as such of very slight importance. The Pitakas have a very different position in Buddhism from that of the Bible in Christianity, the Vedas in Hinduism, or the Koran in Islam. The Pitakas are authoritative in the way that Euclid is authoritative; not in the sense of Moses, the Rishis, and Mohammed. The modern Buddhist regards his sacred books with great reverence and goes to them repeatedly for instruction: but he considers them true because he finds them reasonable and (to the extent of his researches) verifiable. His reason never abdicates its throne, and he could not comprehend how any one could seriously say, "*Credo quia impossibile.*"

Hence, toward the unverifiable elements that have become interwoven with the Buddhist doctrine, the modern Buddhist may choose between two attitudes, both of which are at the same time consistent with science and consistent with the spirit and the principles of the Buddha. He may reject some of the Brahmanistic elements and retain others — such as Karma and the ultimate morality of the universe — on faith, as being not indeed verifiable, but at least not inconsistent with science. Or, if he prefers, he may give up all the Brahmanistic elements of Buddhism and take as his religion only the Four Noble Truths and the altruistic teachings of the Buddha; and these, of course, can never be inconsistent with science, and, so far as they demand verification at all, are thoroughly verifiable.

This flexibility of Buddhism certainly gives it a very great intellectual advantage over all other religions as they are commonly understood and practiced to-day. I do not say that they give it an advantage over the Christianity of the Gospels; but Christianity has had an historical development which has deprived it of much of that flexibility which its founder meant his teachings to possess. It is with something like a shock that one turns from the words of the Buddha to some orthodox Protestant work on the "Plan of Salvation," with its neat cosmic scheme and its anthropomorphic conceptions of the First, Second, and Third Persons of the Trinity; or to a Catholic treatise on the "Infallibility of the Pope," or the necessity of infant baptism. And if we Christians allow our Christianity to be permanently identified with dogmas like these, we must not be surprised if our missionaries have but ill success in Burma and Ceylon, and if every year a few more of our learned men announce their conversion to Buddhism and spread the tidings over the Orient that Christianity is dead.

One of the great prerequisites for a religion that is to live and to serve mankind for long is its ability to grow and to adapt itself to the changing needs and the changing intellectual environments of successive ages. And its free attitude toward authority gives Buddhism this advantage in a preëminent degree. If its leaders know how to utilize this advantage they will have reason to be very hopeful for the future of their religion. Its purified form will probably appeal only to the few. But there will always be a few to whom its appeal will be exceedingly strong. Its very atheism will be a source of strength as well as of weakness. For while the great majority of mankind will doubtless always feel the need of a personal supernatural power, there will always be some who do not feel this need and to whom the mystical makes no appeal. To these the other great religions have little to offer that they can accept. And it is well that for them there will always be open, as a last refuge, this religion, which, while it cannot lead them to God, can lead them to a very lofty morality, and to the Great Peace.

To what extent *can* Buddhism really lead to peace and how is this possible? What are its relations to human happiness,

and what are the springs of its power? It would seem to many at first that Buddhism is more likely to disseminate sadness than joy. And indeed, as I have shown (in spite of the denials of its advocates), the result of Buddhist teaching is very often a melancholy view of life and the destruction of many of its innocent pleasures. Here I need only refer the reader to what was said on this subject in a previous chapter. Life, indeed, has many sorrows, but it also has certain real joys, such as health, success, love. But Buddhism is always trying to embitter these few sweet things with the thought of their insecurity and their impermanence. The Buddhist apologists may say what they like, but there is no denying that nearly all the experiences which we naïve Christians, Jews, Parsees, and Mohammedans in our ignorance call the "good things of life," are to the Buddhist evil and to be avoided. Thus the Buddhist in his extreme fear of sorrow — a fear which seems almost an obsession — deliberately cuts himself off from a large number of the positive and solid joys of life. For fear of the pains and disappointments of ordinary social intercourse, he should wander alone like a rhinoceros.

And not only does the Buddhist's fear of sorrow deprive him of much of the happiness that others possess; his philosophy, on the other hand, deprives him of the chief defenses which other religions provide against sorrow. I refer, of course, to the belief in a personal God, in an immortal soul, and in an eternal life of joyful reunion with those whom one has loved, and in the presence of God. The dying Christian is pointed to Christ and reminded of his endless love; for the dying Buddhist, according to Fielding Hall, the only word of comfort is, "Think of your own good deeds!"

It is therefore not surprising to find, as we have found, that the pure Buddhism of Gautama had to be mingled in the very beginning with much popular belief before it could be accepted, and ever since then has been overlaid with one incrustation after another. And it is surely a significant fact that wherever Buddhism has spread, one of the most inveterate tendencies among its converts has been to transform the Buddha himself into a god, and worship him as such. Most human beings are more conscious of their weakness than of

their strength, and cry out for aid from some more than human Power which can understand and help them. In like manner, popular Buddhism, even of the Southern type, has to all practical purposes restored the substantial self which philosophical Buddhism banishes, and either substituted heaven for Nirvana, made Nirvana over into a state of "eternal comfort," or neglected it altogether. The truth is that the ideal of peace which the Buddhism of Gautama holds out does not appeal to the masses. If popular Buddhism is to be reformed and put in accord with the teachings of the founder, the people must be taught the unpleasant tidings that the Buddha is altogether dead and gone and there is no personal God or nat or devata to help one; that prayer in the sense of petition is vain; that the goal after which all should strive is non-existence; and that even short of Nirvana, there is no real self that survives death. One may wish the reformers well and yet be pardoned for questioning whether such a reformation of the popular faith would work any increase in the happiness of the people.

Buddhism, however, has its consolation in sorrow, or rather several different kinds of consolation. In fact, each of the different elements of Buddhism has its own sort of comfort — warm or cold — to offer, and he who does not like one may try another. Thus, in the case of the loss of dear ones, the ignorant Buddhist may hope that the Buddha will reunite him with his beloved in the next life. He to whom Buddhism means almost exclusively the loving service of his fellows will take comfort in increased activity and the effort to live worthily of the one who is gone. I met one man of this sort who had lost his father, and who apparently did not look for comfort of any sort. Whether he should ever meet his father again he had no idea, and he did not think about the question. What heaven or Nirvana might be he knew not. There might be another conscious life and a happy one or there might not; but for his own part he found his happiness just in doing his duty and in serving his fellows here and now. Of course there are not many men of this type — in Buddhism or in any other religion. But whatever one may think of this sort of consolation, it speaks well for Buddhism that it can occasionally produce this kind of man. For he had drawn his inspiration from the Buddha.

The Buddhist whose religion consists of the Four Noble Truths and the strictly Buddhist method of deliverance will seek his consolation for the loss of friends in still a third way. He will tell himself that death is inevitable and universal and will get what comfort he can out of that. This is evidently the sort of comfort that Gautama himself believed in, for it was thus that he comforted his disciples at the prospect of his own death. "O Ananda," he said, "have I not often declared to thee that it is in the very nature of all things, howsoever dear and beloved they may be to us, that we must divide ourselves from them, leave them, sever ourselves from them? Everything born, brought into being, and formed, contains within itself the inherent necessity of dissolution." Further than this, for the consistent Buddhist every dear one lost marks a closer approximation to one's own perfect freedom. I asked a Buddhist once what consolation his religion had to offer a mother who had lost her child. He replied by telling me of a woman of his acquaintance whose only son had recently died. At first the woman grieved, but then she took comfort in the thought that she had one less tie to bind her to the world.

But Buddhism has more than this negative consolation to give. It does lead — and this is a verifiable fact — to an exhilarating sense of independence, of being one's own master,— a deep and abiding peace, a spiritual freedom, which is very real. The Buddha said of it: "Whoever hears, sees, and welcomes with joy this methodical arrangement of the Law which is a mine of happiness and prosperity, and honors it with folded hands, shall attain . . . the happiness of perfect contemplation, that deep calm of uninterrupted bliss, with his senses in the highest perfection and illuminated by unclouded knowledge." [1] And again: "He whose appetites are stilled, who is indifferent to food, whose goal is the freedom which comes of realizing life's emptiness and transiency, is hard to track as the flight of birds in the sky. Even the gods envy him whose senses are quiet as horses well tamed by the charioteer, who has renounced self-will, and put away all taints. No more will he be born whose patience is as the earth's, who is firm as a pillar and

[1] Quoted by Dudley Wright in the *Buddhist Review* for April, 1912 (p. 122).

pious, pure as some unruffled lake. Calm is the thought, calm the words and deeds of such a one, who has by wisdom attained true freedom and self-control." [1] "O joy! We live in bliss, amongst men of hate, hating none. O joy! In bliss we dwell, healthy among the ailing. Yea, in very bliss we dwell, free from care amidst the careworn. In bliss we dwell possessing nothing; let us dwell feeding upon joy like the shining ones in their splendor. Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered sleeps in sorrow. He who has given up both victory and defeat, he, the contented, is happy.[2] He who has tasted the sweetness of solitude and tranquillity is free from fear and free from sin, while he tastes the sweetness of drinking in the Law." [3]

And while we may not be willing to go all the way with the Buddhist, there is no doubt that his freedom from servitude to a world of things and of egoistic desires, and most of all from the tyranny of the self, brings a peace and a joy that the hustling Westerner, with his materialistic ambitions and his constant alternations of hot hopes and chilling fears, knows nothing about.

"'Tis not in seeking,
'Tis not in endless striving
Thy quest is found:
Be still and listen,
Be still and drink the quiet
Of all around.

"Not in thy crying,
Not in thy loud beseeching,
Will peace draw near:
Rest with palms folded,
Rest with thine eyelids fallen —
Lo, Peace is here." [4]

The Buddhists of Burma and Ceylon, as a matter of fact, impress one as a decidedly happy people and happy in their religion. And this is true not only of the ignorant ones who

[1] Dhammapada, 93–96.

[2] Buddhism is thoroughly opposed to war. For a scholarly discussion of its position and its influence on war see "Buddhism and War," by W. L. Hare, in the *Buddhist Review* for January – March, 1915 (pp. 4–17).

[3] *Ibid.*, 197–201, 205.

[4] Edward Rowland Sill.

have made the Buddha into a god, but also of the monks and the better-informed laymen who know quite well that Buddha is dead and gone. Their happiness, indeed, is sedate rather than jubilant; it is a calm and steady peace. The First Noble Truth has, to be sure, thrown a very superficial touch of melancholy over their lives; but on the whole they are, I repeat, a happy people, and they seem to take real joy in their religion. To one who has come to think of the joy of religion as springing from the belief in God, and who has learned that Buddhism is atheistic, this will come with some surprise: and such a one may well ask what are the sources of happiness in Buddhism.

This question can hardly be answered if we stop with the view that Buddhism is atheistic and do not go on to analyze this atheism. It is quite true that Buddhism denies the existence of "God." But while it is atheistic theoretically, it is theistic pragmatically. It has, in fact, a very pragmatic god. And here I have in mind not the religion of the ignorant who pray to nats and devatas and regard Buddha himself as a kind of god or all-powerful being who hears and answers prayers. I refer to the Buddhism of the monks themselves. For this orthodox Buddhist religion, the universe itself, under the guidance and control of the Law of Karma, takes the place of the Christian or Mohammedan God; and as I have said, a very pragmatic god it makes. For the pragmatist every real (and not merely verbal) difference, every real being (and not merely abstract term) must *make* a difference to some one: and the meaning of the term "God" pragmatically will be summed up in those things which God is conceived of as *doing* for us human beings. If you want to know what God means to the believer, ask what things would be different to him if God should, for him, cease to exist. What are these things that God does? Are not the following the more important for the rank and file of believers? (1) God is on the side of righteousness and assures ultimate victory to the ideal. (2) In more concrete phrase, He rewards virtue and punishes sin. (3) He assures to the believer a life after the death of this body, and a life in which the virtuous shall be rewarded and the sinful punished. (4) He hears and answers prayer.

Now, the point I wish to make is that the universe, with its

Law of Karma, does for the Buddhist all these things. (1) The Buddhist's universe is at the antipodes from that of the materialist. It is a world of unfailing causal action, yes; but it is a world in which physical laws play a very secondary rôle to moral laws. As a man sows so shall he reap, teaches the Buddhist: but this not at all in the sense of the natural scientist, but in that of the moralist. Nature for him is supernaturally moral. The universe itself is a power not ourselves that makes for righteousness. (2) Hence it results necessarily that every virtuous act brings its inevitable reward, and every sin its unescapable punishment. (3) And in order that this may never fail, Buddhism takes a future life of retribution quite for granted. The "anatta" doctrine that there is no substantial ego makes no pragmatic difference here. In heaven, hell, rebirth, or Nirvana, every man (however "man" be interpreted) shall, in the course of ages, receive the full reward of all his works. (4) In a very real pragmatic sense, the universe hears and answers prayer. And here I refer to what in a previous chapter I called the third theory of prayer and the one most common among the monks. This orthodox Buddhist theory of the way in which prayer is answered is different from the Christian, but the outcome is the same. For the Christian and Mohammedan, petitional prayer is an appeal to a conscious Being who hears and by an act of will grants or refuses the request. In Buddhist theory there is no conscious being to hear or to will; but the universe is such that prayer has a certain amount of power to aid in bringing about its own answer. It is, if you like, a kind of magic. In this world in which physical forces are decidedly secondary to moral ones, prayer itself is a kind of force. You set it going and *something* is bound to result. Your father is ill and you pray to Lord Buddha for his recovery; or, better still, you have certain Pali verses chanted by the monks in honor of the Blessed One, and you accompany the prayer or verses with certain offerings. The Blessed One will not hear anything that is said nor take any note of your offerings; but these prayers and ceremonies will in themselves tend to restore your father to health. They will not do so infallibly any more than the prayer of the Christian will do so, for there are a great number of other moral forces at work and

each of them must act as a factor in the total result; but your prayer is sure to have some effect, and it may be just enough to tip the scale. Or, you have sinned and you pray for forgiveness or do whatever corresponds to that in the Buddhist ritual. Your prayer is not heard and no superior being takes pity and pardons you; but your prayer is itself a means of acquiring merit and of counterbalancing the evil Karma which your sin piled up. Thus in a very real sense for the Buddhist all prayer is efficient, in spite of the fact there is no god there to hear it.

The Law of Karma thus acts as a very pragmatic god. I must point out, however, that the Christian God does one thing for the Christian which Karma can never do for the Buddhist. In enumerating above the pragmatic values of the idea of God, I left out what to many will seem the most important of all. I refer to what is called the mystic sense, or the feeling of God's presence. For many a religious person — for all deeply religious Christians — this sense that God is near, that He sees and knows and understands, that He actually does hear, forms the chief value of the religious life. This is something for which the Law of Karma offers no substitute. Individuals who prize this personal relation to a personal God would turn sadly away, starved and unsatisfied, if you should tell them that the universe merely acts *as if* it loved and understood. You may assure them that it will give, in this life and the next, all that any god could give, and they will still feel cheated of the best. To use an illustration of William James, the difference is that between loving a woman and loving a cunningly devised automaton which acts *as if* it loved you and were conscious of your love. To the true lover there could be nothing more ghastly than the discovery that his beloved is really an unconscious machine, with no loving heart back of its deceptive smile. Better, a thousand times better, he will say, that I had laid her in her grave, and gone mourning all my days, than that I should learn that she whom I loved had really never been. And to the man with any touch of mysticism in him nothing could be more ghastly than the discovery that this universe, which he had taken for the garment of God, for the bodily manifestation of the Great Com-

panion, had in reality no conscious and loving spirit at its heart.

It is the lack of this personal touch that makes the Buddhist Karma so inferior to the Christian God in its power over men's lives. Neither prudential considerations nor moral precepts, nor even admiration for dead heroes and their ideals, ever grip the heart of a man in the way that personal relations to personal beings always do. And this, I think, largely explains the undoubted inferiority of Buddhism to Christianity as a source of happiness, and also as an inspiration for the moral life. The relation of Buddhism to this third value of religion must now be considered.

Different aspects of Buddhism as a moral religion were necessarily dealt with in the preceding chapters, hence not a great deal need be said concerning the moral value of Buddhism here. I do, however, want to point out that the whole complicated question of the ethics of Buddhism becomes very much more comprehensible if we cease to think of Buddhism as a unitary and consistent system, and regard it instead as an amalgam of the three quite different elements into which it was analyzed at the close of the last chapter. Each of these has contributed its share, and the result is that strange combination of the negative and the positive, the puerile and the profound, the selfish and the noble, which makes the moral teachings of Buddhism so difficult to understand.

The Brahmanistic preconceptions which Gautama was forced to bring into his religion, together with various popular accretions that have been added since his time, are responsible for the "sanctions" of heaven, hell, rebirth, and Nirvana, which have played the same large part in the life of Buddhists through the centuries that their counterparts have played in the life of Christians and Mohammedans. There can be no doubt that many a Buddhist is withheld from sin and propelled toward acts of virtue by the thought of Karma and the hope of accumulating a goodly store of merit. On the other hand, the modes of acquiring merit are not always intelligent or uplifting. In spite of the Buddha's insistence upon the futility of merely external works, the various ceremonies at the pagoda or in the home are thought of as having a moral value of

their own — a value often greater in merit-acquiring power than that of works of real mercy and usefulness. The two monk-disciples of the Hermit of Mandalay Hill told me that the merit acquired from building a hospital was great, but far greater was that which came from building a pagoda. And this is the common view all over Burma. The Buddha, I repeat, would have been as shocked and grieved at this view of merit as any one: and yet I must point out that there is in the very concept of "acquiring merit" — a concept which the Buddha certainly held — something essentially immoral. It involves the idea — either directly or indirectly — that "merit" is something to be measured quantitatively, that it is a personal possession which may be acquired and stored up and weighed and handed about. This notion of it is carried to its extreme in the orthodox Buddhist doctrine of *reversible merit.* That one may acquire merit and hand it over to some one else who has done nothing to gain it, though obviously inconsistent with the spirit of Gautama's teaching, is not only common belief, among the laity and monks alike, but is good orthodox doctrine which may be defended by quoting chapter and verse from the Pitakas — as the learned and enthusiastic Buddhist, Mr. F. L. Woodward, has done in the "Buddhist Review" for January, 1914.

But even aside from this almost materialistic extension of "merit," the emphasis which one finds so repeatedly in Buddhist writings and Buddhist thought upon acquiring merit presents exactly the wrong view of a good act, focusing the attention necessarily on the reward that one is to get out of it. Self-forgetfulness on this plan is impossible; and the Buddhist — or the Christian — who has not yet learned that virtue must be its own reward, if it is to be virtue, is bound to be merely a more or less prudent egoist.

Of course the man who clings to the pure Buddhism of the Four Noble Truths, so far as he thinks of "acquiring merit" at all, means by it the growth of a good and desirable character; and he would be one of the last to attribute any real value to external performances of any sort. "Neither the study of holy books," said the Buddha, "nor sacrifices to the gods, nor sleeping on the ground, nor difficult and strenuous vigils, nor

the repetition of prayers can bring purification to the man enmeshed in delusion. Neither gifts to the priests, nor self-castigation, nor the performance of rites and ceremonies can work purification to him who is filled with craving." The true Brahmin — the man, that is, really worthy of reverence — is not one born in a particular caste or one who performs certain particular rites; but the man who has conquered himself and who gladly follows the great Law. "Not by matted locks, nor by lineage, nor by caste is one a Brahmin: he is the Brahmin in whom are truth and righteousness, and purity. What boots your tangled hair, O fool, what avails your garment of skins? You have adorned the outer parts, within you are full of uncleanliness. Not him do I call a Brahmin who is merely born of a Brahmin mother; men may give him salutation as a Brahmin, though he be not detached from the world: but him I call a Brahmin who has attachment to nothing. Him I call a Brahmin, indeed, who has cut all fetters, who never trembles, is independent and unshackled. Him I call a Brahmin, indeed, who, though he has committed no offense, endures reproach, bonds, and stripes, who has endurance for his force, and strength for his army." [1]

It is the inner side of the act alone, the intention of the will, that counts. Few moralists have ever laid more stress on the inwardness of true morality than did Gautama. And this inevitably: for the whole of his own peculiar teaching is a psychical matter. His one aim is psychological — the proper training of the mind. Hence all external acts are simply irrelevant. Hence also no one — whether god, man, or devil — can really help or harm another. In the life of self-culture all external appeal is simply silly. The Buddha's point of view is well summarized in his last words to his disciples: "Work out your own salvation with diligence."

The great moral ideal of the Buddhism founded upon the Four Noble Truths is self-mastery. "If one man conquer in battle a thousand men," says the Dhammapada, "and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerors. One's own self conquered is better than the conquest of all other people; not even a god, a demi-god, not Mara with Brahman

[1] Dhammapada, 393–99.

himself, could change into defeat the victory of a man who has vanquished himself, and always lives under restraint." And the Buddha, with his keen psychological insight, saw that self-conquest and self-control meant primarily the control of the mind, the mastery of one's thoughts. The first verse of the Dhammapada reads: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage. 'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me' — in those who harbor such thoughts hatred will never cease. For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time: hatred ceases by love; this is an old rule. He who lives without looking for pleasures, his senses well controlled, moderate in his food, faithful and strong, him the Tempter will certainly not overthrow, any more than the wind throws down a rocky mountain." "This mind of mine went formerly wandering about as it liked; but I shall now control it thoroughly, as the rider who holds the hook controls the furious elephant. Be not careless! Watch your thoughts! Draw yourself out of the evil way, as an elephant does who is sunk in mud." [1]

The morality of self-control and self-culture has never been carried further than by this aspect of Buddhism. Yet it is a limited kind of morality; and those critics who insist that Buddhist ethics are purely negative have in mind these ethical teachings that spring from the Four Noble Truths. For, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, the strictly logical consequences of this pure but narrow Buddhist doctrine are essentially egoistic. The one virtue that it really gives birth to is prudence. Wherever it exists unmingled with the genuinely altruistic feeling which I have called the third element in the Buddha's teaching, it results in a type of character which is ever looking out for number one, with a coldly calculating rationality which knows to a hair the cash value to self of every seemingly unselfish act. Buddhism has few apologists so enthusiastically sympathetic as Paul Dahlke; who writes as follows: "That cordiality which forgets itself for others, that affection which breeds tenderness and emotion, is entirely

[1] Dhammapada, 1, 3, 5, 8, 326, 327.

wanting here. The whole moral scheme in Buddhism is nothing but a sum in arithmetic set down by a cold, clear egoism; as much as I give to others, so much will come again to me. Karma is the most exact arithmetician in the world." [1]

The man whose morality is described in this sentence of Dahlke's is not likely to be capable of much enthusiastic devotion to a great cause. The Buddhist monk is usually "harmless"; ahimsa, harmlessness, in fact, is one of his great virtues. But it would not be wise to go to the monasteries in search of a hero. There is something about the Buddhist's fear of sorrow that seems to the Western mind unaccountable, if not downright pathological. Is, then, sorrow such a dreadful thing? Is there nothing else so bad?

The extreme individualism of that kind of Buddhism which is founded on the Four Noble Truths, and which is represented in the quotation above from Dahlke, makes social and coöperative work among the Buddhists almost impossible. The missionaries, at any rate, of both Burma and Ceylon will tell you that the Buddhists of their acquaintance seem to be almost incapable of coöperation with each other in any common charitable work and that very few care to try. Charitable they are, extremely so at times, but only as isolated individuals. This fact, if it be a fact, as I suppose it is, would at any rate follow naturally from the individualism of the Four Noble Truths. Each man's great task is to cultivate his own character, to pile up merit for himself, to cut all ties (social as well as sinful), and to get out of this evil world into Nirvana as soon as may be. The Buddhist ideals are all individualistic; there is no place in Buddhism for an endeavor to make this world a better place to live in, to build up a new social order, to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven. There is an article in the "Buddhist Review" for July, 1910, which is interesting in this connection. It is entitled "Buddhism and Social Problems," and the author, Madame Alexandra David, an enthusiastic Buddhist, does her best to show that Buddhism is not out of line with the modern ideals of social helpfulness. The best that she can say for her religion is that it might make war upon ignorance and that Gautama's own spirit of love and

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

helpfulness is what the sad world needs. It is noticeable that she says nothing of the Four Noble Truths; and as I have so often pointed out, Gautama's altruistic spirit points directly away from the individualism which they inculcate.

But the spirit of Gautama forms after all the dominant note in Buddhist ethics. The universal love and good-will toward all sentient creatures which so filled his teachings and his life have been carried by Buddhism to the ends of the earth and characterize this religion, to some extent at least, wherever it is found. Thanks to this, Buddhist ethics, on the whole, is decidedly positive rather than negative. It will vary, of course, as embodied in different individuals according to the predominance in each of what I have called the first, second, or third elements. In an individual whose Buddhism consists merely of the Four Noble Truths, combined with various Indian beliefs and superstitions, we shall find temperance, prudence, purity, long-suffering, meekness, charity, but all of them cultivated in a coldly calculating spirit with an eye on the main chance. On the other hand, wherever the loving spirit of the Buddha forms an important constituent in a man's morality we shall have a result worthy of genuine respect. And whenever this spirit is combined with the self-mastery, the philosophical attitude of mind, the poise and self-reliance, the superiority over material things and worldly pleasures, the independence from fortune, and the courageous outlook upon the future which come from the acceptance of the Four Noble Truths and the training they inculcate, we have a type of character which for strength and genuine nobility one will seldom find equaled.

The great springs of power for the moral life which Buddhism furnishes are, then, (1) the belief in Karma and retribution; (2) clear understanding of the sources of sorrow and the ideal of the Great Peace; and (3) the altruistic teachings of the founder, and most of all the inspiration that comes from his example. It is from this latter especially that the finest flowers of Buddhist morality have sprung. Its influence is probably most obvious among the members of the new reform movement; but one meets with it also among much more simple and less learned men. The first Buddhist with whom I

became acquainted in Ceylon gave me a new insight into the manner in which the spirit of Gautama might permeate many a common follower of his, and express itself in all his words and actions. The reader may not be uninterested in a short account of this man as I knew him.

It was in the Temple of the Tooth at Kandy that I made my first acquaintance in this land "where every prospect pleases and only man is vile." The temple was thronged by thousands of worshipers, — for it was the evening of the full moon, — and the monks at every shrine were busy heaping up the white jasmine flowers at the feet of the Buddha and tending the hundreds of tiny flickering candles which the pilgrims had brought in token of their devotion to the Blessed One. We had seen most of the usual sights and had reached that part of the temple known as the "Great Eastern Library," where I was busy endeavoring to make an appointment with one of the monks for an interview two days later. The monk spoke only a little English, and as I was trying to make him understand me, a young Ceylonese, who had considerable command over our language, came to my assistance and helped me to make the appointment. It was evident that an interpreter would be useful at the interview, and the young man said that if he could arrange to be in town at the time he would like to help us; though he feared this would be impossible, as he was off next day for Matale (his home) to worship at the shrine there, and could hardly return for several days. He added, however, that if I wished it, he would give up his trip to Matale, and stay to act as my interpreter at the interview. Of course, I assured him that this was not necessary, and that I could doubtless find some one else. So after he had answered some questions of mine on Buddhism, and had warned me against giving to the professional beggars in the temple, he left me, asking, however, that he might call at my hotel on the following Monday.

The next day the mail brought me this note: —

Sir, — I have the pleasure to inform you that I am unable to prevent my going to Matale, I who accompanied you last night to the Great Eastern Library. I hope you will kindly postpone the talk with the

monk concerning Buddhism till Monday. May "Triple Gem" keep self and lady sound and healthy. I will be coming on Monday to meet you at your hotel. I will try my best to show you and lady even something about Buddhism. I remain, sir,

Yours faithfully,

V. P. H.

A few minutes later a telegram was brought me, which also was from him and to the same effect as the note. When Monday came he arrived, true to his promise, and we had our talk about his religion. He was, he told me, a upasaka, or a layman who has taken upon himself certain additional vows and duties. I asked him to tell me more in detail about them. Besides enumerating the various vows which I have mentioned in the previous chapter, he said the first duty of the upasaka was to wish well to every one, — never to think of any one without earnestly desiring for him the best things. His next duty is helpfulness to all who are in need. "If I come upon a man," he said, "who needs money, I must give it him: if I have no money I must give him my coat." The eight vows which the upasaka takes he must keep not only in the letter but in the spirit. Thus when I asked my new friend why he had both written and telegraphed to let me know that he could not keep an appointment which had never been definite or really binding, he said, "Oh, that was the Fourth Precept — not to lie."

On the day following our talk, much to my surprise, my new-found friend reappeared and offered to take me to several places of interest in Kandy. "Yesterday," he said, "I came by appointment; to-day I come as upasaka — to help you." We spent the day visiting various monasteries and temples and talking with the monks; and on the day following he took my wife and me out to Matale to show us the famous Alut Vihara, or monastery. Matale, as I have said, was his home, and I discovered that he was a teacher of English and religion in a boys' school there, and that he had been granted two weeks' leave — which he was spending, evidently, "as upasaka." The Alut Vihara is perched on a rock in the midst of the jungle. You approach it from the highway by a narrow path, and, after climbing a long flight of steps, you come upon the monastery gateway, in a cleft between two enormous

boulders. To your left is a rock-cut temple, with a large reclining Buddha, carved many centuries ago; farther up is the cave in which Buddhaghosa, the famous Buddhist commentator and missionary, is said to have lived and copied out the scriptures which he had brought from India, for distribution throughout Ceylon; and on the top of the highest rock, commanding a wonderful outlook over palm-grove, jungle, and mountain range, is a sacred dagoba, shining white against the sky.

It was interesting to watch my friend's bearing as we approached the monastery, and to see his reverence — of both attitude and expression — whenever we entered a shrine. "Here is our Lord Buddha," he would say in hushed tones as he prostrated himself on the ground before the image. And whenever a monk appeared, or even a little novice of ten years wearing the yellow robe, he would prostrate himself again.

Of the future of Buddhism he was quietly confident. It was, he told me, slowly and steadily growing. And when I asked him among whom it was making its converts, he answered very simply: "Among the Tamils and the Germans." Evidently the zeal of German Pali scholars is appreciated in Ceylon. But his conversation was ever returning to the intrinsic glories of his religion and to the thought of Nirvana. This (in quite unorthodox fashion) he described as "eternal comfort," real and conscious joy; and he was always busy telling us of the way thither. He never said in so many words that he desired to convert us, but it was plain that this was his wish. "When you are gone from here," he said, "I will pray for you every day to the Lord Buddha and to the devatas. I will pray that you should be safe and happy; but most of all that you should come here again and stay a long time and learn more about Lord Buddha and his way to Nirvana!"[1] And at another time, quite without self-consciousness or any touch of pride,

[1] In a letter written by my friend some months after we left India (for we still correspond), this same wish for our salvation reappears. He writes: "I will not forget you, gentleman and lady, and that affection will I hope not efface until the last moment, and I pray Sakkiya Muni and meditate to take the said affection till I, we, attain Nirvana, with my soul. I hope according to Buddha's teachings that we might meet to the same place and attain Nirvana — the everlasting comfort. Many a letters reach my hand — more the affection arises in my mind."

he said, "Of course, if I could bring my brother to Nirvana by going to hell myself, I should want to do so."

Of Christianity he knew practically nothing. The missionaries, he said, were very good people, and one of them had very recently lent him three books which he meant soon to read. Two of them, he said, were called "Gospels," and he had read two chapters in one of them. He believed Christianity was probably a very good religion. "But," he added, "I feel very sure there is no religion like that of Lord Buddha: for it leads us to Nirvana."

I told him that I found many fine things in Buddhism, but that I considered the attitude of those monks who live apart from the world to save their own souls extremely selfish. "Yes," he said, "it *is* selfish. And not all the monks do it, though some do. But it is not the true Buddhism; it is not what the Lord Buddha did. The true Buddhist wants to help everybody, and so be like the Blessed One."

To this Buddhist, at any rate, kindness was not a matter of preaching only, but a real part of life. It beamed from his face and was unmistakable in his smile and showed itself in innumerable little acts. He never called on me without bringing some little gift for my "lady," — a cocoanut, perhaps, or some such simple thing. When we were on our way to visit a monastery, he would stop on the road and buy some pan leaf and betel nut and fruit for the monks. And he never saw a really needy beggar in the street (and in Ceylon there are many beggars in the streets) without giving him something. In the last talk I had with him, just before we parted in the Matale railway station, he took from his pocket what was evidently a treasure, carefully unwrapped the protecting paper and showed it to us. It was a small thin sheet of brass, in the form of a pipal leaf, and on it was roughly etched a seated Buddha. "This," he said, "keeps me safe from evil spirits. Two thousand Pali verses have been said over this by the monks. It is very precious and I always carry it with me. It keeps me safe." I examined the talisman closely, and when he saw my interest he hesitated some moments, apparently in thought, and then said, "If you would like this, you may keep it."

Although he had served me for several days as guide and

interpreter, he would not take anything from me in payment; and the only thing he asked was that I should give him a general letter of introduction to strangers in Kandy notifying them that he would like the opportunity of showing them about the city and its environs without any remuneration.

When he had seen us into our compartment for Kandy and said his last good-byes, he put his hands together and said, quite simply: "May Lord Buddha keep you! May devata keep you!" — and disappeared. In two hours more we had reached Kandy and our hotel, and a few minutes later I received a telegram. It was from our friend, and it read, "May lady and self travel healthily." It was his way of saying *Bon voyage!*

This was my first acquaintance in Ceylon. My last was no less interesting and no less filled with the spirit of the Buddha. He is one of the leaders of the Maha-Bodhi movement and he gives up his entire time to spreading the reform. The only reward he looks for or cares for in this life or in the other is just the doing of his duty. In our last talk together, the evening before I sailed back for Europe, we were discussing Parinirvana, and when I asked him if he desired it for himself, he said: "As a fact I do not. What I should like best would be an endless succession of lives in this world so that I might use them all in helping other people."

These are examples of individuals; but, as almost all those who know the Burmese will testify, the influence of Buddhism over a whole people as a people, both for morality and for happiness, is very considerable. Its influence, of course, is not all for the good, and it has its weaknesses and its evil tendencies, as I have tried unsparingly to show. Yet it does work a certain gentleness of spirit and add a subtle charm to life which are not to be mistaken, and which are manifest not only in the individual but in the community as well. To see this at its purest one should go not to the large centers but to some isolated village on the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy, far removed from European influence, and try with sympathetic mind to inhale the spirit of the people and of their religion. It is here that one finds the actual Buddhism of the twentieth century in its living form among the lowly.

Whenever I turn my thoughts back toward the East and

try to focus them upon Buddhism, the first picture that comes to my mind's eye is one of these Irrawaddy villages — any one of a considerable number that the traveler passes on the Irrawaddy steamer. A crowd of quiet men, women, and children is waiting for us at the landing as the steamer turns in toward the shore, noses upstream, and makes fast. Most of the village has come down to see the big boat land, greet returning travelers, and speed those who are departing, or to carry on board the day's catch of fish or the day's product of sun-baked and hand-modeled pottery. The returning passengers walk over the gangplank and join the throng on the shore — women with babies strapped to their backs, pretty girls in their best silks, young men in equally brilliant and tasteful colors, two Buddhist monks in their yellow and orange robes — all spotlessly clean and, to all appearances, quietly and calmly happy. In mysterious fashion some scent of eternal youth seems to cling to the garments of these Burmese of the villages — even to the garments of the old men and women. Their perpetual outdoor life, their sweet neighborly relationships, the endless sunshine, and, shall we add, also the dignity and calm of their religion, have got reflected in their natures like the blue sky in the bosom of the Irrawaddy, so that the stranger, at any rate, fancies he finds in them a simplicity and serenity that make all ages of life quiet yet youthful, and that are all too rare in our hustling West, which is at once so young and so very old.

The crowd is now dispersing — the little children for their beds, the men and women to their homes, or to some shrine, the monks to their monasteries and their devotions. If you follow the throng and climb the ridge above the river where the village stands, you will find first of all a group of pagodas and rest-houses, some new and many old, each with its image of the Buddha. There are more than a dozen, altogether, and the oldest ones — tokens of the piety of some long-gone generation — are now lapsing into quiet ruin, the little inner chamber in which the Buddha sits filled with a wild growth of fern up to his feet, as though Nature, too, were eager to pay its reverence to him who was the Light of Asia. In the larger shrines you will find a few old women kneeling on the matting;

each holding a rose or a cosmos blossom or lotus in her clasped hands, with a rosary wound round one of her fingers, as she whispers her evening prayer and alternately touches her head to the floor and then gazes upward at the calm face of the great Buddha. There are one or two men present also, and if you wait a family party may come in, father and mother and two or three small children, or a group of young men and maidens. Their gentle laughter and soft voices cease as they enter the shrine, and all kneel, and holding flowers in their hands murmur their prayers. No priest or preacher here, no mediator, no spiritual authority, no cringing fear, no blood to be shed or money to be offered — just one individual soul and another reaching out toward the Determiner of Destiny in the way taught them by the Great Teacher of Asia. True, they often fail to understand the words of the prayers they utter. But there can be no doubt that without understanding the words they often understand the prayers. No one who watches them can fail to see that the spirit of prayer is present — the outpouring of their hearts' need, the spirit of thankfulness and of aspiration toward the great ideal of purity and peace of which the alabaster image before them eternally speaks. And never did image better represent its prototype. Fresh flowers in a dozen vases line the lotus at its feet, and little candles, lighted by fervent worshipers, mingle with the last rays of day in the darkening shrine, just as the prayers and the praises ascend to him who has long since entered into Nirvana. The calm of the Buddha's face is not broken: in the Eternal Peace he notes neither worship nor neglect. One by one the worshipers depart, the sunlight dies, the flowers wilt, the candles go out. But in the darkness as well as in the light the Eternal Peace broods over the head of the great Buddha.

A scene like this makes one ask one's self how he would feel if we succeeded in converting these "heathen" Burmese, broke their "idols," tore down all their shrines, and built on the high ridge where the pagodas had been a Baptist church and a Methodist church. And this question I put in all seriousness. What would be the gains and what the losses? First of all, there would be a loss in picturesqueness, certainly — and this

would be a great loss to the tourist — and consequently a loss to the Irrawaddy Flotilla Company, Limited. Yet one may question whether the christianized Burmese would lose all his picturesqueness. He need not change his costume for our dull colors merely because he changes his creed. Nor need he necessarily choose as the type of his ecclesiastical architecture the brick-and-mortar edifices of our Middle West. Certainly one who doubts whether Christianity is consistent with picturesqueness of architecture and landscape has failed to travel in Italy or the Tyrol — or for that matter in England, or even New England. And, after all, is not our great concern for the picturesque a trifle selfish? Should we not ask, first, What would be the result of Christianity upon the Burmese themselves?

The answer to this question will depend wholly upon the type of Christianity proposed. I can imagine a converted Burmese village with a Baptist church at one end, a Methodist at the other, and a Presbyterian and Roman Catholic in the middle, each aspiring after the highest steeple and the biggest bell, each rent with theological controversies, casting out heretics, and predicting eternal damnation to all but themselves, each putting a premium on artificial emotion and holding experience meetings for the production of hypocritical confessions and pious cant. Or, I can picture the village street lined with fat priests who should sow superstitious fears among their converts by means of which they would extort endless contributions for masses, candles, and indulgences. And I can think that the last state of such a village would be worse than the first; — and that in spite of their acceptance of "Salvation by Faith" or of the "Blessed Trinity," they would be better off by a return to the quiet and simple adoration of him who taught the Great Peace and showed the way to it. But I can also conceive of a Burmese village in which the Buddha might still be honored and loved, but which had caught some of the spirit of a still greater Teacher, whose message was more simple than the Buddha's, whose insight into the secrets of the spirit was certainly no less deep, whose example was no less inspiring, and who also taught the Great Peace and pointed out to it, as I believe, a more excellent way.

CHAPTER XX

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN INDIA

ON the value of Christian missions to India from the philanthropic and educational point of view, I shall say but little; for on this subject there can be, and indeed there is, practically but one opinion. From the beginning of this gallant venture till to-day the missionary has taken the great woes of this sad land to his heart, and in imitation of his Master he has not been content with preaching the Gospel, but has given his life also to healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, feeding the famine-stricken, caring for the orphan, and teaching young men and little children. One is uncertain whether to admire most the missionary hospitals or the missionary schools and colleges, both of which have been brought to such a remarkable development. He who is ignorant of the educational and philanthropic work that has been done and is being done by the Christian missionary in India, and in other "mission fields," is blind to one of the most important movements of our times. The opponents of Christianity are not among this number of the blind, but, whether willingly or unwillingly, are forced to recognize a fact which is so patent that none can deny it. Let me quote from two Hindus on this subject. The first is Mr. Jnan Chandra Banerji, who, in an attempt to prove that Christianity can never convert India, takes occasion to write as follows: —

"All over India the missionaries are taking a most important share in training the young through various missionary colleges. In fact they count among their number some of the most prominent educationists of the day. In times of drought and famine they carry food and clothing to the sick, and nurse and tend them. In our fights against oppression, they alone among Anglo-Indians come to our assistance. And the majority of the missionaries sympathize with our political aspirations, as expressed through our congresses and conferences.

All this forms a record of which the missionaries may well be proud." [1]

The other quotation is from a writer in a Hindu paper: —

"The Christian religion is truly fruitful in practical philanthropy to an extent unparalleled in the case of any other religion. Whatever may be its theoretical faults and philosophical incompleteness (one can afford to let that pass), here it stands head and shoulders over every other religion. By its side the most ancient religions and the grandest philosophical systems of the world sink into insignifiance as a motive for philanthropic action." [2]

In every movement, moreover, for social betterment, in every attack on the evils of Indian society, the Christian missionary has played a leading part. And not only so; but from his example has come the impetus that has set India to reforming itself. In Chapter IX we saw that there are many native movements afoot for charitable work and social service in India; but none of these were started or faintly conceived of until the missionary had blazed the way.

Concerning the value of missionary activity in all these directions, there is, as I have said, no difference of opinion; because, indeed, here we are not in the realm of opinion, but are dealing with undeniable facts. And much the same unanimity is to be found on the further question of the evangelical activity of the missionaries among the lowest classes of the Indian population, — the outcastes and the animistic tribes who are too low for Hinduism to touch. It is from these that Christianity is making the great bulk of its converts; and many a Hindu looks on with approval at the process and wishes the missionary Godspeed. In fact, there *can* be no question of the great value of Christian activity among these low and despised millions. The religion of these various peoples is a base form of animism and magic, which has not the remotest relation to morality. They are the prey of superstitious fears and ignoble customs, the slaves of impulse, with no defense in public opinion or cultured self-control against the various

[1] "The Future of Christianity in India," reprinted from the *Hindustan Review* (Lahore, 1904), pp. 15–16.

[2] Quoted by Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*, pp. 277–78.

forms of vice and temptation to which they are exposed. To make anything of such people might well seem hopeless; but many a missionary has wagered his life on the outcome. And the result is that all over India, in jungle and in city, a transformation is being wrought in the dregs of Hindu society which none but the Christian missionary had dared to hope for. I do not mean that anything sudden or miraculous has happened; but that for the first time in the history of these various races, their eyes have been opened to the distinction between right and wrong, and they are really trying — with many a relapse, to be sure, but still *trying* and with considerable success — to give up drunkenness, theft, violence, and immorality, together with their magic and the most degrading of their superstitions, and to live decent lives and obey the missionary. I have myself seen something of the Bihls in Gujerati and the Doms in the city of Benares, and these are typical, I believe, of the jungle animists and city outcastes all over India; and I can testify to the admirable work that has been done among them — admirable both for the unstinted devotion which it involves and for the excellent results that have been attained.

So much for the philanthropic activity of the missionaries and their evangelical work among the lower classes. Thus far we have met with no real problem, but only with facts — facts which may be learned by consulting any one of a number of missionary manuals. But when we come to deal with the effort of the missionary to make converts from among the adherents of the six highly developed religions that have been dealt with in this book, we face a question upon which there is by no means a unanimity of opinion among intelligent people, whether in India or in Christendom. Both the missionary and his message and the very idea of a Christian propaganda are being very stoutly attacked; and we should do well not to hold our ears nor listen merely to our pre-formed opinions, but to give both sides a hearing.

And in the beginning it must be said that when one goes for the first time to a non-Christian land and makes the acquaintance of non-Christian gentlemen, he finds that the missionaries appear in a light which he never had guessed irom the perusal

of his missionary manuals at home. As a young friend of mine now residing in Burma put it: "Before I came out I pictured the natives waiting with impatience for the arrival of the missionary, hungering and thirsting for the words of truth that should fall from his lips, and calling us to deliver their land from Error's chain. When I reached here I found that the Burmese got on very well by themselves without the missionary, did n't want him, and were usually quite indifferent to what he said or did." The "natives," in short, take the missionary in much the same light as they take the soldier or the merchant, or the civil servant. In general they regard him as one of the many who have come out to India to make a living, — and in fact as one who has been uncommonly successful at it. If the average Indian could hear the remarks so often made in England and America about the privations and self-sacrifice of the missionary he would be astonished and probably would be inclined to smile. It has never entered into his head that the missionary's life is one of privation. For he sees the missionary living in a style which, compared with his own frugal life, he must consider luxurious; in possession usually of a large compound, and a pleasant house tastefully furnished, with plenty of good food, many books, and seemingly any amount of leisure. More than one Indian has pointed out to me the contrast between the comforts and possessions of the Christian missionary and the poverty of the Hindu sannyasi, the Mohammedan saint, or the Jaina or Buddhist monk.[1] The missionary, as they put it, lives only less well than the officers of the civil service. Both have come out for "careers," and both have found uncommonly good ones. I am not writing this in any spirit of criticism upon the missionary. Personally I consider his profession one of the most truly unselfish to be

[1] Still more striking to the Indian is the contrast between the poverty of his own holy men and the comparative wealth of certain Christian clergymen at home. One Indian writes thus: "From the time of the ancient Rishis, the lessons of plain living and high thinking were carefully taught to the Brahmacharis, and rigidly practiced by the Gurus, Pundits, and Purohits, in their daily life. Such being the case, the sight of bishops and archbishops rolling in wealth, living in palaces, and voting in the House of Lords, calls up anything but reverent feelings in the mind of the average Hindu." (Jnan Chandra Banerji, *op. cit.*, p. 12.)

found in the world. The Indian does not understand how much the missionary has given up, nor what it means for him to leave home behind, send his children away from him halfway round the world when the time comes for their education, and spend his life among a people that can never really understand him, and in a land whose scorching summer heat and countless pests are an unending source of discomfort or danger to the European. I am glad that the missionary has a few of the comforts of home in his self-imposed exile. He ought to have them. And yet I see now, as I did not see before I went to India, how the Indian views the matter, and how inevitable it is that he should so view it.

And while I would not criticize the missionaries for their comforts, I would criticize *some* of them for their unsympathetic attitude toward Indian thought, religion, and civilization. Perhaps it is natural that they should take this attitude; for many of them feel that they have come out expressly for the purpose of attacking these things. Whether or not they are justified in this view of their mission, it is at any rate unfortunate that they do not make the effort to understand better than they sometimes do the best things in the religion which they are seeking to replace. Rabindranath Tagore said to me: "The Indians feel that the missionaries do not understand them and do not care to; and they are unwilling to accept anything from an unsympathetic source. No one doubts, of course, that the missionaries are *moral* and *good* men. But the Indian feels that it is the missionary's *business* to be moral. He is a *professional* missionary and gets his living by it, — it is a kind of trade. The *born* missionary — the man all aflame with the spirit of God — has indeed a great influence for good in India. But there are not many of these anywhere — not many are born. There are many missionaries, on the other hand, who are just soldiers with a priest's garb instead of a red coat."

Another aspect of this lack of sympathy in things Indian is a certain narrowness which one finds in some missionaries — a narrowness which is often only the reverse side of a noble earnestness. Fortunately this is much less common now than it was a few years ago. Yet even to-day one will come upon

good men, or more often good women, in the mission field who are apparently quite sure that God hath left Himself without a witness in all lands but Palestine, and that the Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the *only* rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.[1]

I must say, however, that the impression I have derived from the missionaries I have met personally is extremely favorable. I made a point in India — as I did a dozen years before in the Turkish Empire — to get acquainted with the missionaries and see their work at close quarters; and I do not hesitate to say not only that they are the most devoted group

[1] Shivanath Shastri, the venerable leader of the Brahmo Samaj, told me an experience of his illustrating the attitude of this type of missionary. He was returning, several years ago, to India from England, and two missionaries who were on the steamer watched him with some curiosity as he read now from Confucius, now from the Koran, now from the Bible, etc. At last their curiosity could be restrained no longer, and they asked him what religion he professed. He answered, "Universal Theism." To this they replied that there really was but one true religion, and that was contained in God's only revelation — namely, the Old and New Testaments. Mr. Shastri thereupon challenged them to name some religious truth contained in the Bible and found nowhere else. They were not slow with their reply, and triumphantly named the "Golden Rule." Mr. Shastri immediately turned to Confucius and then to the Talmud and read them the same injunction from both of these. But this had no effect on the missionaries. They were, to be sure, considerably surprised; but they answered: "Ah, well, you know the Devil, too, can inspire men to write the truth." To which Mr. Shastri responded: "Gentlemen, you have disarmed me; there is nothing I can reply to that!"

The change that has come about in the attitude of the missionaries themselves in the last fifty years is clearly put by Dr. Clough: "At that time [1864, the year when he went out to India as missionary to the Telugus] little was known of the Oriental races. Christian people took it for granted that the older religions were wholly bad and that their scriptures contained nothing but evil. There was no sympathetic approach, no feeling that perhaps God had not left Himself unrevealed to the heathen world. "It distressed many thoughtful men and women in Christian lands at that time to think that unless the heathen heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ and accepted it, they would be eternally lost. This was my opinion, too, when I went to India. It formed my missionary motive. I looked upon the Hindus as simply heathen: I wanted to see them converted. As the years passed I grew tolerant, and often told the caste people, if they could not or would not receive Jesus Christ as their Saviour, to serve their own gods faithfully. During my visits to America I sometimes told American audiences that the Hindus were in some respects better than they." (*Social Christianity in the Orient*, p. 73.)

of men and women I have ever known, but also that a large portion of them impressed me as liberal-minded, far-seeing, and surprisingly wise. In the case of very many of them the contact with non-Christian religions and with representatives of other branches of Christianity — Protestant and Catholic — than their own has opened their eyes to new truths, and they go home on their first furlough with broader views of God and man and a more intelligent insight into the real needs and the highest ideals of the missionary enterprise than they took out with them in the first enthusiasm of their youthful devotion. If Protestants of different denominations, yes, if Protestants and Catholics, ever come to understand each other, it is on the mission field. And this sympathetic understanding of the experienced missionary is beginning to extend itself very noticeably, so as to take in the finer aspects of the non-Christian religions. Moreover, the endless variety of work and responsibility that falls to the lot of most missionaries in a land like India develops in many of them, after ten or twenty years' training, a practical wisdom, a soundness of judgment, and an ability to understand and deal with men, and to influence and direct whole communities, rarely met with at home.

We come now to the arguments against the missionary enterprise as such. These arguments may be reduced to two which seek to prove: (1) that the conversion of India to Christianity is impossible, and (2) that it is useless. The first of these arguments has many forms and much to say for itself. We are told in the first place — and this is peculiarly the position of the Theosophical Society — that Christian missions can never succeed because Christianity is not native to India. The most that could be hoped for would be a change of external forms and the adoption of certain pious words and phrases; but the *religion* of a people is too deep to be touched by any amount of preaching and proselyting. Religion is a matter of centuries, yes, of thousands of years, of tradition; and only a religion that has such a power of past generations behind it can really get hold of the heart of a people. Hence the conclusion is reached that it is far wiser to start with the religion which the people already possess and seek, not to convert them to some

new form of faith, but to draw their attention to the more spiritual and ethical side of the faith which is already theirs. This, of course, is the work which the Theosophists are themselves pursuing — and with some success — in both India and Ceylon. Any other form of religious teaching they regard as artificial and as doomed to failure because based on a profound misunderstanding of social psychology.

No one can deny the psychological facts on which this argument is based. The religion native to a land has enormous advantages over every newcomer, advantages of an emotional and authoritative character so great that one should certainly think many times before seeking to replace it with a foreign religion, which might be a little but only a little better. For to destroy an old religion is a very difficult process; and, moreover, if one succeeds in so doing there is the great danger that in destroying one religion he may have undermined the foundations of religion as such, and opened the way only to a godless and reckless skepticism or naturalism. Hence, if Christianity is only a little better than its rivals, the missionary enterprise is of very doubtful wisdom. But it must be remembered that those who believe in missions believe that Christianity is *very much* better than its rivals; so much better in fact that the risk of failure and the risk even of ultimate harm are worth taking. This question of the superiority of Christianity will occupy us later on in this chapter. Here we must consider further the Theosophist argument already stated.

And the most noticeable thing about it is that while the psychological facts to which it appeals are undoubted, the argument taken as it stands proves too much. It aims to show not only that the conversion of India would be difficult (a fact which no one knows better than the missionary), but that it is psychologically impossible. This, as I say, if it proves anything, proves much more than the Theosophists would wish. It proves that Christianity could not succeed among the Romans and Greeks, nor among the Germans and Anglo-Saxons; in short, that it could succeed only among the Jews — with whom, alone, as a matter of fact, it failed. Similarly the argument proves that Islam could not succeed among the Turks and Persians nor in India, and that Buddhism could

not succeed in China and Japan, nor in Burma and Ceylon — where the Theosophists are now so busy defending it as the "native" religion. According to it Buddha, Jesus, Zarathustra, and all the other "Masters" of the Theosophist canon were deluded and could not have succeeded, and we must therefore all be only animists still (or "Toltecs"?). No; conversion is indeed a difficult process, but to regard it as impossible is to despair of reason and conscience and human nature, and to fall back into a lethargy of pessimism worse far than the active undermining of all religions.

Nor if we fasten our eyes more directly on India does the prospect of converting a large part of its population seem so hopeless as many would have us believe. The census figures are somewhat encouraging. Yet, it must be said, they are far from settling the question of the practicability of converting India. The total population of India, Burma, and Ceylon in 1911 was 317,653,000, of whom 4,287,000 were Christian. This seems, indeed, but a drop in the bucket — hardly more than one per cent of the total population. Yet the rate of increase during the decade 1901–11 is more encouraging than the actual number of present converts. I give the figures as condensed from the "Statesman's Year-Book," combining the statistics for India, Burma, and Ceylon: [1]

Increase of total population during the decade	6.7 per cent
Increase of Hindus	5
Increase of Sikhs	over 10
Decrease of Jainas	6
Increase of Mohammedans	6.7
Increase of Parsees	6
Increase of Buddhists	13
Increase of Animists	2
Increase of Christians	31

The rates of Christian increase during the three decades preceding this were respectively 22, 33.9, and 30 per cent. Of the million added to the Christian community between 1901

[1] The actual numbers according to the 1911 census have been in part given in previous chapters. For the sake of convenience in comparison I repeat them here: Hindus (in all three countries), 218,526,000; Sikhs, 3,014,000; Jainas, 1,248,000; Mohammedans, 66,931,000; Parsees, 100,096; Buddhists, 13,195,000; Animists, 10,295,000; Jews, 20,080; others, 37,101.

and 1911, perhaps 250,000 should be regarded as natural increase; so we may say that roughly 750,000 of the Christians in India, Burma, and Ceylon are due to conversion.

These figures, as I have said, are encouraging, yet hardly prophetic: one who should seek on their basis to figure out just how long it will take to christianize India would show a lamentable ignorance of the missionary problem. For, as we shall presently see, much the greater proportion of conversions are made from the low castes and animists; and figures based so largely on success with this inferior part of the population give us absolutely no basis for any sort of prediction as to success among that great mass of higher caste Hindus, Buddhists, and Mohammedans who are as yet almost untouched by Christianity so far as census figures are concerned. Hence I fear that the census returns will hardly answer our question; and though it is natural and right that the missionary should scan them with interest, he should not be unduly elated at reported gains nor too much cast down at reported losses. Let him remember the words of Emerson: "Whenever an appeal to numbers is made religion is dead." We are all apt to give too much weight to figures. The critic counts the converts and counts the cash and asks, Is it worth the money? The unthinking missionary advocate does the same and points out that you can save souls at so much "*per*." It is the same point of view in both cases and equally absurd whichever way applied. The "convert" who goes down as such in the statistics is not necessarily *saved* in any sense of the word that is really important. We have enough "Christians" and "church members" at home to enable us to value statistics of this sort for about as much as they are worth. Jesus had something to say on this subject: "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father, he is it that loveth me." But this criticism works both ways. While there are doubtless many converts on the books who are quite lacking in the spirit of Christ, the influence of the missionary is not to be limited to the "converts" of the statistics. For the spirit of Christ radiates from every Christian home and school and hospital, and bears a blessing to all who come within its reach. And there are innumerable Hindus, Moslems, and other "heathen"

who, though still loyal to their old religions, are not far from the Kingdom of God.

These things should be kept in mind in our interpretation of what is, perhaps, the most striking fact in the missionary statistics — the fact, namely, that the overwhelming majority of Christian converts are from the tribes of the jungle and the dregs of Indian society. Hindus of high caste, Moslems, Buddhists, and members of other highly developed religions are, indeed, occasionally converted, but such a conversion is a rare occurrence. This is a significant fact, and its implications should be considered. The explanation of it is not simple and must be sought in a variety of causes. For one thing, Christianity has usually made its first appeal to the lowly and uneducated. It was so in the Roman Empire and we should expect it to be so in India. The high-caste Hindu is both more fettered by the bonds of tradition and more attracted by the subtleties of his own religion and philosophy than is the sweeper or the Bihl. Of considerable significance in this connection is also the method by which many of these "conversions" from the lower classes are made. I refer to what is known as "mass conversion" as practiced by the Methodists. The missionary goes into the jungle and induces the inhabitants of an entire village to be baptized together and to call themselves Christians. Or he does the same with some low caste in the city. They yield to his persuasions from purely social and economic considerations. For, gentle reader, if you were a "chamar" or a "Dom," you, too, would ask no theological questions, but would be glad to join any religious body which would make you respected and get you a job. Having baptized his newly made converts, the missionary proceeds to teach and if possible to convert them. The method, on first hearing, of course, sounds absurd: and the Church of England missionaries are violently opposed to it. Yet the Methodist missionaries who have tried it are enthusiastic in its praise. And this, I hasten to say, not out of zeal to swell the numbers in their reports (at least not chiefly so), but because they insist that it has certain very great practical advantages. For one thing, all social persecution of individuals by their fellows is thus avoided. And what is more important, the missionary gains at once a position

of authority which he utilizes in bringing about genuine conversions, and also in restraining the members of his flock from all sorts of immoral practices. They may not understand his theology, but they look up to him as a father, and obey him. He may now order them out of a saloon and they will at once go, or he may if necessary even beat them for past transgressions and they submit — and profit thereby. Thus, through having baptized them into a purely nominal Christianity, he wins an influence over them which makes their ultimate conversion to a real Christianity very much more probable than it would otherwise have been. And even aside from his influence over his immediate "converts," the missionary is enabled to get control over the "converts'" children, and to see that the second generation get a Christian education and are brought up in some sort of knowledge and admonition of the Lord.

I should add, however, that not all "mass conversions" are of the type I have described. The census commissioner says, "Most missions are very careful to baptize no one until he has given satisfactory proof of his being a Christian at heart." The method of baptizing first and converting afterward was quite new at the time of the 1911 census, and there are many missionaries to-day, who practice "mass conversion," but look askance at this extreme form of it.[1]

But whatever we think of this method, we must bear it in mind in interpreting mission figures. It is estimated that if all the missionary bodies would follow the same plan, over fifty million of the lowest classes in India could be baptized in a very short time — and so go down in the reports as "converted to Christianity."

Of course these "mass" methods cannot be practiced with the higher classes of society. Moreover, conversion from their ranks — at least in the case of the Hindus — is made particularly difficult because of the severe social persecution to which the individual convert is usually subjected. The mis-

[1] Mr. Patton, of the A.B.C.F.M., tells me that a certain Congregationalist missionary in South India has so many applications for baptism, and is so determined not to baptize more than he can care for spiritually, that he has set a limit to the number of converts to be received each year — namely, one thousand. Hence he has started a waiting-list. Fancy a waiting-list for church membership!

sionaries always point out this fact in explaining their lack of success among the higher castes, and it undoubtedly has some weight. There are other causes at work, however, among intelligent Indians which give more food for thought. One of these is the example of European "Christians" in India and in other parts of the world. For the educated Indian keeps his eyes open to what is going on in the world, and when he notes how slight is the influence which Christianity has upon many "Christian" men and women and upon most "Christian" nations, he is led to question seriously the advantage which would come to India from a change of creed. "If we are to judge a religion by what it set itself to but has failed to achieve," writes the editor of the "Indian Social Reformer," "we are afraid none will come out worse than Christianity."[1] The respondents to Mr. Kenneth Saunders's Questionnaire concerning religious conditions in Ceylon were almost unanimous in the opinion that the greatest hindrance to the spread of Christianity among the Buddhists was "the inconsistent lives of Christians themselves."[2] The attitude of many of the European residents of India toward the "natives" is certainly hardly such as to induce great respect for their religion; and the "black man" forms his own opinion on the basis of the things that he sees — for example (and this I quote from an Indian), "the cases of assault committed upon defenseless Indians by Anglo-Indians whose Saviour enjoined them to offer the left cheek to those who smote them on the right." The following sentences may also be of service in aiding us Christians to see ourselves as others see us: "In the field of politics Christianity has admittedly no place. The white man is very loath to be relieved of his burden, and the very natural and laudable attempt of the yellow nations to preserve themselves from extinction is openly and shamelessly denounced as the Yellow Peril, which to non-Christians appears very much like blaming a man for defending his iron safe from aggressors who want to break it open. Self-interest is the only principle which governs the politics of the world, and Christianity has no part or lot in it." "The noble, self-sacrificing heroism, the devotion to

[1] *Indian Social Reformer* for August 1, 1915.
[2] *Buddhist Ideals*, Appendix, p. 161.

duty, the culture, the chivalry, the humanity which the Japanese, without any active belief in a paradise after death, have exhibited, form a noble contrast to the savagery and bestiality of the allied armies in Peking not very long ago, and this vivid object-lesson, by showing how little Christianity has in reality influenced the lives of the Western nations, has further undermined the faith of the 'pagan' world in all that Christianity lays claim to." [1] Our utter disregard of Christian principles in our international relations has always struck the intelligent Oriental as very significant; and we can very well imagine the effect that the present senseless war must have upon the whole East, and how it must inevitably influence the reputation of our religion in non-Christian lands. At the outbreak of the war a Japanese who had lived in the West wrote a significant letter to the New York "Nation," from which I quote here two or three sentences: "We Orientals must insist in future not to believe whatever high philosophy on love or peace or humanity the Western scholars and theologians might write. We Japanese are glad at least to have a country in a far-away East, not in the West. I have been losing for some long while my own respect toward the West and her own civilization." [2]

"The war has come in the nick of time," says an anonymous writer in the "Asiatic Review," "to clear the minds of those Orientals who have been ill satisfied with their own culture and traditions. The vaunted civilization of the West is stripped bare, and the diseases of her body politic — the cancer which is eating at her vitals — are made manifest. Let us ask — What is the cause of this war? The answer is brief: it is the will to possess, the aggressive spirit which has the West by the throat. . . . Mutual suspicion, jealousy, and hatred pervade the atmosphere. Militarism and the menace of diplomacy increase. . . . The mind of man in the West is set on outward ends and material aims. The inward vision and the spiritual impulse are lost. In spite of all Christian professions the tale of actual practice is the tragedy of selfish interest and lust for gold, aptly described as the yellow peril." [3]

[1] J. C. Banerji, *op. cit.*
[2] Yom Noguchi, in the *Nation* for October 8, 1914.
[3] *A View from India on the War*, by *S. R. Asiatic Review* for May, 1915.

Even more to the point is a letter from an Indian Christian in the London "Challenge," quoted by a recent writer in the "Atlantic Monthly": "The difficulty of finance, in his opinion, 'is a very small problem compared with the enormous burden of proof that, in the eyes of the enlightened spiritual Hindus, this war will throw upon European missionaries who come to us hereafter to preach the Gospel of Love.'" And after describing a service in St. Paul's, the keynote of which was given by the war-spirit, he concludes thus: "As I walked home that night, amid the glaring lights and the many khaki uniforms, threading my way through that great throng that seemed continually to pour out of the cathedral, my thoughts went back for a moment across the seas, to my village home in India, far from the military camps and the legislative council, — pagan, heathen, animistic, call it what you will, — but where they love their neighbors, and, if they hate, they hate with a bad conscience; and I felt that there, at least, in the wide world to-day, Christ could still walk as He walked in Galilee." [1]

This obstacle in the way of the missionary's success might be elaborated in great detail: but I shall leave the reader (or the missionary) to do that for himself, and shall go on, instead, to point out two further obstacles to the conversion of the intelligent Indian which the missionary is not likely to mention. The first of these concerns the question of "church organization." Too many missionaries and missionary boards in the past have identified Christianity with their own particular type of denominational church government, and have had much too contemptuous a feeling for the forms of religious life native to the Indian village community. The result has been, on the one hand, to divide Indian Christianity into a confusing multitude of sects,[2] and on the other, to stamp Christianity in the Indian mind as essentially a foreign religion, and thus to arouse the hostility of many of the best leaders of Indian thought, who are bent on rousing in India a spirit of nationality.

[1] Quoted by Herbert W. Horwill, in "The Cost to Humanity," *Atlantic Monthly*, for March, 1915 (p. 425).

[2] Cf. the black man in South India, who (according to Dr. Crothers) described himself as a "Scotch Presbyterian."

But a still greater obstacle to missionary success is the undiscriminating way in which Christianity is only too often presented by the missionaries themselves. A Buddhist in Mandalay, with whom I had several talks, told me that he had been educated in a mission school and that he saw many fine things in Christianity, but that, on the whole, he considered it *an immoral religion.* On questioning him I discovered that his opinion was based on various Old Testament stories which he had been taught as a part of Christianity and which represent Jehovah as conversing and acting in anything but the spirit of Christ. Certain Christian dogmas act in the same way upon the "unregenerate" mind as do the Old Testament stories just referred to. Mr. Saunders tells us, in analyzing the results of his Ceylonese Questionnaire: "Most of our correspondents agree that the idea of Atonement is alien to the Buddhist consciousness. . . . The substitutionary theory which is widely preached does not appeal to the Buddhist mind. It conflicts with their sense of the fitness of things." Examples, however, are cited from missionary discourses, in which it is attempted to make the dogma of substitution more palatable to the heathen: examples which are said to appeal to the Buddhist sense of justice, but which, in all frankness, seem better adapted to appeal to the Buddhist sense of the absurd. A young Hindu friend of mine, who is almost ready to be a follower of Jesus, was astonished when I told him that he was nearly a Christian. "For," he said, "I was always told in the mission school that I could n't possibly be any sort of a Christian unless I first believed in the Trinity." Considering how little we hear of that famous doctrine from the pulpits at home, it is rather surprising to find so much made of it in missionary attempts to convert the "heathen." Some missionaries seem to feel it necessary to put forward this most difficult of Christian dogmas as the first lesson in Christian teaching; and the result is about what one might expect. For the Moslems in particular, of course, no greater obstacle to Christian conversion could be devised: yet it appears to be the missionaries to the Moslems who make the most of this doctrine in their preaching. My Mohammedan acquaintances in Benares showed by their conversation that they had come to regard the

Trinity as the distinctive feature of Christianity; and insisted that the Church of England missionaries made it the center of their propaganda. Probably this was an exaggeration. And yet one may read in the official "Year-Book of Missions in India" that one of the chief problems confronting the missionary to the Moslems is "the impartation of a true concept of God as Triune instead of an absolute Unit which excludes the Trinity."

But the obstacles which a certain type of Christian theology puts in the way of the spread of the Christian religion are not due primarily to the missionary, but to us Christians at home who allow our living religion to be identified with a collection of half-dead dogmas. The result of this is to be seen in the low opinion that many an educated Indian has of our theology. "To the philosophic Hindu," as one of them writes, "Christianity is a superstition." As illustrations of the way in which we are allowing our religion to be pictured by many of the Indians, I set down here extracts from two Indian articles on the subject of Christianity. The first is from the little monograph already cited, entitled "Is not Christianity a False and Fabulous Religion?" The author of it has found in the Old Testament — and in the doctrine of the Church that the Old Testament is infallibly inspired — great stores of ammunition for his attack. "The Bible," he says, "presents certain ideas of God and man. Are they true? Christendom says — Yes, and demands that the race must receive them as true or be outcasts from divine favor. . . . In 1st Samuel, 15th chapter, is an account of the final extermination of Amalek, and the accomplishment of the long-nurtured revenge. Saul is sent by Samuel to do the deed and the commission is in these words: 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up out from Egypt. Now, go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.' Can it be believed that the God of Justice ever commanded a tribe of men to be exterminated because their ancestors, centuries before, did wrong? Can it be believed that the Father of men ever thus commanded his

children to cherish the spirit of deadly hatred toward the fellow-beings from age to age and then, after ages had passed, instigated them to satiate their cherished revenge in the blood of infants and sucklings because they were the posterity of those who had wronged them? Yes. This is all devoutly believed as truth by Christendom."

As the reader may imagine, the writer of this pamphlet does not stop with Amalek, but brings up many another instance from the Old Testament in which the God of Israel shows but small measure of what we like to call the "Christian spirit." Nor has he altogether neglected some of the Christian dogmas which, though we are perhaps half ashamed of them, still remain in our official creeds. He writes: "They say that the first parents or so-called Adam and Eve, made a sin in consequence of which mankind undergoes sufferings. . . . If that God of the Bible be so unjust as to punish one individual for another's crime, then we do not hesitate to call him tyrant. It is the belief of all Christians that he who does not believe in Christ will have to suffer eternal punishment. What a vulgar belief this is! Is not that God cruel and tyrant who sends man into the house of eternal fire like the hell of the Christians simply because he does not believe in the so-called Christ, though he may be good and righteous?"

The above, as I think I have said, is from the pen of a member of the Arya Samaj. A Buddhist writer, contributing to the "Buddhist Review," says: "The Christian faith does not correspond with the truths of science. Christianity is static; science, on the other hand, is dynamic, based as it is on the ever-expanding sum of human knowledge, and therefore must eventually push aside any teaching which rests merely upon the shifting basis of faith. Two thousand years is a long time, and mankind has grown up; it no longer blindly accepts what it is told, and we find that there is an ever-increasing number of those who regard it as highly improbable that some almighty ruler of the cosmos should have taken the trouble to 'send his son — part of his godhead — to this infinitesimal portion of the universe, in order to redeem mankind from the sin of having eaten a certain fruit hundreds of generations before.' That is frankly the essence of the Christian faith. Certainly

a poetic idea, but savoring of the myths born in the infancy of the human intellect, just as does the parent of Christianity, the religion of the Pentateuch." [1]

"Wretched caricatures of Christian teaching," you will say; "utter misrepresentations of the true nature of our religion." And undoubtedly they are. But how are such misrepresentations possible at all? If you have read our official creeds and our dogmatic theologies, you know how they are possible, and you know that the Buddhist and the Hindu have hardly done more than take our "orthodox" theologians at their word. If we allow Christianity to be identified in the minds of the non-Christian world with a mass of scholastic subtleties and mediæval dogmas, we shall have nothing to blame for it but our own cowardice.

On the whole, therefore, we can to some extent understand why the great majority of Christian "converts" are from the lower and less intelligent classes. And this brings us to one of the most important of all the questions involved in the missionary enterprise, namely, the character and quality of the converts. On this there is a bewildering variety of opinion. In the first place, one must note, and with some discouragement, how many of the Christian European residents in India agree with the non-Christian opponents of missions in regarding a large proportion of the converts as very poor material, indeed. Over and over you hear the advice from Anglo-Indians: "Don't get a Christian servant: they are the worst thieves in the land. Get a Moslem — they are honest."

There is no doubt in my mind that the dishonesty of Christian servants — like the dishonesty of Sunday-School superintendents — has been greatly exaggerated. That many of them are dishonest, however, is undeniable. And there are reasons enough why this should be expected. In the first place, as we have seen, they commonly come from the lowest classes, among whom dishonesty is not regarded as evil, and often they are "converted" in name only. Some of these self-styled "Christians," in fact, have never been accepted as such by any missionary, but call themselves Christians in the hope of securing a position thereby.

[1] *Buddhist Review* for January, 1912 (p. 38).

There are certain more discouraging considerations, however. One hears not infrequently of genuine Christian converts from the lower castes mixing up with their Christianity all sorts of ancient superstitions and animistic rites which the missionary who converted them had supposed entirely a thing of the past. Dr. Clough, after laboring in India for forty-five years, learned to his great surprise and disappointment that some of his native Christians were not only recurring to their various ancient rites and ceremonies, but were making use of his name in these incantations as the deity to be invoked; while a little way to the south, in another mission field, the grave of a missionary who had recently died was being covered, by the native Christians, with marks of worship and signs that prayers for help had been offered. To prevent this the other missionaries built a high wall around the grave; and then the worship was conducted outside the wall.[1] And not only do the converts occasionally lapse back into superstitions; some of them, if we may believe the European residents of India, lose rather than gain in morality by the change of religion. An Englishman whom I questioned said that many of those who really have been admitted into the Church have thereby been driven out from their own castes, and so are set adrift from the old customs and social restraints, which at least were real, and have failed as yet to get much in their place. If this be really the case, it is an argument, so far as it goes, against missions. But the Englishman admitted that a slow improvement among Christian converts is noticeable: and he added, "Of course, it has taken about two thousand years to make us Europeans even as good Christians as we are; and you know jolly well you can't make over the native in a day."

If we could "make over the native" in half a dozen generations, — make him over into a thorough Christian — it would be worth the effort. Can it be done? I asked three missionaries how in their opinions the second generation of converts compared with the first. One of them said that the second generation was much better than the first; the two others said that in the case of the better class of Indians, Christians of the second generation were decidedly inferior spiritually and morally

[1] *Social Christianity in the Orient*, pp. 394–95.

to their parents. This (in the opinion of the missionaries) is due to the fact that these children of Indian Christians have no strong convictions of their own, have never been called upon to go through persecutions for their faith, and hence take it as a matter of course and as a rather external thing.[1] A fourth missionary to whom I put the same question was more hopeful. The second and third generations, he admitted, were religiously and spiritually inferior to the first. They lack certain elements of value which come from suffering for the faith. But *morally*, he insisted, they exhibit a real and undeniable advance upon their parents and grandparents. Especially is this noticeable in such matters as telling the truth, keeping promises, and general reliability. When they lie they do it less artistically. And among all the missionaries with whom I have talked there is unanimity of opinion that in the *lowest classes* the second generation is decidedly more moral and more Christian than the first. The Provincial Superintendent of the 1911 census for the United Provinces says that education is making each generation of native Christians better than the one which preceded it, and he adds: "The Hindu fellows of these converts have now to acknowledge not only that they are in many material ways better off than themselves, but that they are also better men." And the Census Superintendent in Mysore — himself a Hindu — writes: "The enlightening influence of Christianity is patent in the higher standard of comfort of the converts and in their sober, disciplined, and busy lives." [2]

In spite of these comforting words, it must be admitted that the facts which I have been discussing do not make as encouraging reading as most missionary reports. It is evident that many of the "converts" fail to become good Christians. Yet this fact is hardly conclusive as a proof of the failure of missions. When the criticism is made that the converts of the missionary do not make good Christians, the question is very pertinent, Did they make good Hindus, good Buddhists, good Moslems? How much of the spiritual meaning of their old

[1] It is perhaps significant that the first of these three missionaries (the one who regarded the second generation as an improvement on the first) was a Roman Catholic, and the two others were Evangelical Protestants.

[2] Quoted by Sir Andrew Fraser, "The Progress of Christianity in India," *Nineteenth Century and After*, for August, 1914 (pp. 468–77).

religions have they and their fellows ever got hold of? How far have they followed its higher precepts? If their Christianity is partly a form, what was their Hinduism and Buddhism? How much of it was a matter of external observance, of making sounds without meaning? How much has ever been done by the leaders of their old religions to train them in paths of morality and point them to the highest ideals? Or, if they came from the outcastes of Indian society, how much better off were they when performing their magic rites in the jungle or giving themselves up to vice and violence in the city streets? The fallacy of the opponents of missions lies largely in the supposition that so long as the Indian is not interfered with he makes a perfectly good and ideal Hindu or Moslem, or at least a harmless and happy animist, and gets the best out of his old faith. The whole of this book should show how false this supposition is.

And if we turn for our information to the missionaries themselves, who certainly are in a position to know the nature of the converts and who would naturally be the first to feel discouragement if there were reason for it, we find them all optimists. They will tell you of many cases of the most genuine Christian patience and courage in severe persecution on the part of Indian converts. They will show you how they are building not for to-day but for the future — for ten or twenty generations hence. And some of them will point out to you the fact already mentioned that the spirit of Christ has permeated many a locality in India where the Christian creed is unknown. Nor need you go to the missionary to hear this. Listen, for instance, to these words from a stout defender of Hinduism: —

"Though the Indian people will never be Christians, they have nevertheless not rejected Christ. He is already enshrined in the hearts of the educated Indians, as the great example of practical morality. Indeed, it is not too much to say that by rejecting Christianity, with all its creeds, theories, dogmas, and ritual, they have caught the *spirit* of Christ in a more real sense than would otherwise be the case. . . . And though Christianity has not gained a solid footing in India it must be admitted that judged by a higher standard it has *not* been a

failure. It has given us Christ and taught us noble moral and spiritual lessons which we have discovered anew in our own scriptures. . . . It has awakened a new spirit of inquiry in the drooping Hindu mind. It has made Hinduism conscious of its greatness. It has held up to view the baneful effects of certain soul-degrading customs which used to prevail, and prevail still, in Hindu society. In short, it has quickened it with new life, the full fruition of which is not yet. Let not the missionaries, therefore, retire from the service of humanity which they have undertaken in India, and which is after all the true service of God. Let them finish the consecrated task which they were the first to set hands on, and work the more zealously because there are many laborers in the vineyard of the Lord now — 'not fanatically nor yet pharisaically, as if they themselves had nothing to learn,' but with energy and discrimination; and the high glory of having restored India to the proud position she once occupied in the scale of nations will be theirs." [1]

[1] Jnan Chandra Banerji, *op. cit.*, pp. 9 and 16. I cannot refrain from quoting also from an editorial in the *Prabuddha Bharara* for December, 1914. The writer has been pointing out that the spirit of political nationalism has quite driven Christ out of Europe, and he proceeds thus: "But if Christ-force finds itself played out in Europe, is there no place on earth to form the scene of its future workings? Yes, there is, for, as one Indian preacher once declared to the world, Jesus Christ has come to India. . . . So India has need of Christ to-day. He has to bear witness through the Holy Ghost in the life of his disciples in India that Religion is one, that all the religious Revelations of the world proceed from One Source, and that the same Word becomes flesh in different ages and climes to effect the atonement of man with God. . . . Let Religion rise in India in the full strength and glory of its unity and universality, and then flood the world again with the saving waters of a renewed faith in its realities and harmonies. This is the mission which India has to fulfill through her collective life, and unlike Europe, therefore, she represents a nation that affords to every saint and prophet the fullest scope for their authority and inspiration. And over and above this, she stands pledged to restore to every prophet and saint their ministry over the people of their choice, for all creeds will find in the unity of religion that India preaches to mankind a new inspiration and justification for their existence and the strongest incentive to progress on their respective lines. . . . So Europe will re-accept Christ one day: the rebel child will return to her paternal home once more. How this transformation would precisely come, it is beyond all human foresight to predict. . . . But the new Europe that will rise from the ashes will have a real baptism in Christ, and the wisdom of India will nurse her back to her new life. Till the time when all that comes to pass, Christ, as we have said, has his work to do in India, and as we celebrate the birth of Christ this year, with the

On the whole my own opinion as to the Christian conversion of India is this: that, on the one hand, the prospect is much less brilliant than one would gather from certain missionary books, and that, humanly speaking, it is impossible to predict that India will ever be entirely Christian; and that, on the other hand, the results thus far attained have amply justified the money and men, the thought and effort and human life which have been expended in the missionary enterprise, and that one cannot reasonably set any limits to the *possibilities* of the future. Unquestionably a great deal more of India can be converted than has been converted thus far.

And this brings us to the second question concerning missions: Granted that conversion is possible, is it desirable? "Why," the upholders of this argument against missions will ask, — "why substitute a new symbolism for an old? All religions teach ultimately the same truths; they differ only in outer garb, only in words and forms. Why, then, seek to replace the words and forms and symbols which have grown hoary and reverent by ages of devotion and which have a hold over the Indian's imagination and emotion which no new symbols, however noble they may seem to you, can ever win?" This is perhaps the commonest and perhaps also the best of the arguments against missions. One meets with it surprisingly often among Christian people. The Indians and the Chinese and Japanese, we are told, have religions that in some ways are very noble. Possibly from an abstract point of view they are not equal to Christianity; but after all, for each man his own religion — unless it be positively base — is the best religion. And this because its symbolism has a hold on him that no new symbolism can ever acquire.[1]

There is much truth in this argument; and certainly, if it

distant spectacle of a Europe 'red in tooth and claw' looming before our eyes, a sense of added *ownness*, of heightened kinship in present concern and future purpose, is borne in upon our soul at the contemplation of Jesus, the Son of God. We feel to-day as never we felt before that he has come to stay with us, and that the seal of his constant inspiration and authority will never be lacking to ratify our national efforts for the establishment of the unity of Religion among men."

[1] A view practically identical with this is held by one of the most prominent and learned of Christian theologians — Professor Troeltsch, of Berlin. It is also, of course, the common Theosophist view.

were a matter only of exchanging one set of symbols for another, there would be little justification for missions. But the argument must stand or fall with the very questionable assumption that all the great religions *are essentially* alike, and differ only in minor details or in outer form. Now, it is doubtless true that these religions are at one in many of their teachings; and I think every religious man should rejoice at the discovery which has been made only in our times that there is so much in common in all the religions of the world. Certainly it has not been the aim of this book to minimize any of this unity or to belittle the nobler sides of the non-Christian religions. Yet every honest man who has no pre-formed thesis to support must surely see that between the religions there are not only likenesses but differences. And the crucial question so far as missions is concerned comes, therefore, to this: Are these admitted differences negligible or important, and is Christianity on the whole sufficiently superior to the other religions to justify the missionary effort for the conversion of the non-Christian world?

On a question so involved as this each man must, of course, form his own opinion, and I shall certainly not venture to force the reader's view or even to express in full my own. I shall, however, put forward certain considerations, which should be taken for what they are worth. In the first place, we should (and this, I suppose, is evident enough) take for comparison the best aspects of the different religions concerned and be careful not to contrast the ideals of one with the actualities of another. And in the second place, if we are seeking for a comparison which the followers of other religions than our own will admit as fair, we must try to view them all from a neutral point of view, instead of placing ourselves *within* one and judging all others from it. Thus it would be easy, but most unjudicial, to declare that Christianity is the best religion because it is true and the others are false. It would be easy for us to do so, but it would be equally easy for the Mohammedan, the Buddhist, and the rest to judge *our* religion in the same cavalier fashion; and then there would be nothing left for us to do but exchange dogmatisms and let argument degenerate into recrimination. For an objective judgment on this matter

it is safest to take our stand in this world, and compare the different religions by their verifiable effects upon human life. Theoretically, of course, we might be able to make fair and objective judgments from some metaphysical point of view; but for most of us the metaphysical point of view is so influenced by the religious that such a performance is exceedingly difficult. At any rate, all that I shall have to say on this subject here will be based on the humbler and safer position.

Christianity and the finer forms of Hindu philosophy have much in common. Both have highly spiritual views of the world, both exalt the soul and bring it very close to God. But there is one difference between them that must not be overlooked. The Vedanta of Shankara and ultimately also the Vedanta of Ramanuja picture the soul as so dependent upon God or so lost in Him that there is no place left for real individuality and genuine responsibility and freedom. There is much that is beautiful and attractive in quietism of this sort; but every doctrine that denies real freedom to the individual — freedom even toward God — is a blow at the finest part of the moral life.

In comparison with Buddhism and Jainism, Christianity has the unquestionable psychological advantage of the belief in an active spiritual world, in a living God rather than in a dead man, or a group of inactive Tirthankaras. This I say is an advantage *from the point of view of human life:* it is a *psychological* advantage, to which, in fact, the history of Buddhism and Jainism bear ample witness. And even if we confine our comparison to the field of morality alone, there can be no question, to my thinking, of the very great superiority of Jesus's teaching over that of Gautama. Splendidly ethical as the latter unquestionably is, it takes a subjective point of view which robs the moral life of its finest aroma. In its attempt to forget self through negation, it forever focuses thought upon self and upon the acquisition of merit. Jesus, on the other hand, in noble objectivity, teaches his followers to forget themselves by losing themselves in the defense of some noble cause, in pursuit of some genuine and common value, in strenuous and devoted service to needy fellow-creatures — which is the only road to real unselfishness and the surest way to inner peace.

And as to Islam, its best form is no doubt very like Unitarian Christianity — very like, that is, provided we abstract from Mohammed and the Koran. The Prophet of Arabia was far too fallible to serve as an inspiration for any very high morality; and the Koran, while a true revelation for Arabs of the seventh century and for Africans of the nineteenth, must steadily prove more and more a fetter rather than a help, as modern education increases in the Moslem community. Much as may be said in praise of Mohammedanism, it still is true that *so far forth as it differs from liberal Christianity*, its philosophy is crude, its ideals are low, and its authoritative "revelation" is a hindrance to progress.

In comparison with all these religions the moral teachings of Christianity have certain undeniable advantages. In the first place, no other religion focuses the attention on *sin* in the deepest moral sense as does Christianity. Several religions have excellent methods of moral training and have long catalogues of sins; but no other has gone so to the heart of the matter and shown so unmistakably that in the last analysis sin is not a matter of habit but of *will*. As a result Christianity has been able to rouse a sense of sin which is the first step toward a reform of life, and to keep the attention fixed on the genuinely moral question. And it has been able to do this because, on the whole, it has a keener and more intelligent insight into the nature of righteousness than any of its rivals. For Christianity at its best — as seen, let us say, in the teachings of Jesus — never confuses sin with any sort of ritualistic uncleanliness, never blurs its ideal of righteousness with that of the acquisition of merit, nor lowers it by eagerness for personal advancement — for *selfish morality*. Other religions have many admirable precepts: Christianity alone seems to have realized to the full that love is the fulfillment of the law. And in saying this I am not forgetting that the "Golden Rule" and other of the Christian precepts can be duplicated in the noble scriptures of non-Christian religions. But in none of these is the principle of loving self-forgetfulness in the service of others made the one all-determining principle of life, from which all particular precepts inevitably flow. There is a *largeness*, a whole-souled devotion in the Christian spirit

which all the other religions, in spite of their admirable maxims, somehow miss. And hand in hand with this superiority of Christian teaching goes the enormous influence and inspiration which stream out from the example of the founder. Jesus embodies in a concrete and moving fashion, as no other founder has ever done, humanity's supreme ideals of sacrifice and service. And I think it is safe to say that no other historical personality has ever had an influence approaching that of Jesus as an inspiration and a present help toward the highest form of self-forgetful usefulness and active love.

The simplicity of Christianity also must be mentioned in every consideration of the wisdom of an attempt to substitute it for other religions. There is a fine and spiritual side to all the religions native to India: but it must be noted that in most cases this finer side is for the intellectual only and can hardly be grasped without some philosophy. To the simple minds who cannot understand this philosophy, the native religions have little to offer that is not bound up with external forms and superstitious customs. This is the reason why Hinduism as seen by the average tourist — the religion of the common people in the temples — appears so disgusting. The best of Hinduism is only for the learned. Christianity, on the other hand, offers its best to the simple. True, various theologies, various "philosophies of Christianity" have been contrived for it as difficult as you please and quite incomprehensible to all but the elect. But it is questionable how much of value these contain: and it is certain that the finest things in Christian teaching are to be found in the simple talks which Jesus had with a few fishermen. The fundamental point of view which Jesus taught and exemplified and which has had such transforming power wherever it has been fully grasped in its unperverted form is thus capable of being transmitted directly to the humblest Indian, to whom the intricacies of the Vedanta and the arguments of the Buddha must remain forever sealed. Mohammedanism and Zoroastrianism, of course, are also simple in their way. But they lack a certain emotional depth as well as the moral emphasis which distinguishes Christianity at its best; and above all, as psychological forces, they lack the power over the imagination and over the active

moral life which comes from the partly historical and partly metaphysical image of Jesus.

It is unfair, you say, to compare the subtle Hindu and Buddhist philosophies with the simpler form of the Christian teaching, in their appeal to the uneducated. Perhaps so: but it is out of every zeal for fairness that I have done it. For I have sought in all my comparisons to take the non-Christian religions always at their best. And if we turn from philosophical Hinduism to the actual Hinduism of the great majority of Hindus, the religion of nearly all the large Shudra caste and of the Indian villager of every caste, we find a mass of superstitions, idolatry, external performances, and irrational if not downright immoral customs which have outlived by a thousand years the conditions which originated and excused them — so far as they ever were excusable. Doubtless all these beliefs and customs are shot through with symbolic meaning to him who understands: but how much of this is understood by the Indian villager? And who is there to teach him?

And this leads me to point out an advantage possessed by Christianity over all its rivals which is of very considerable importance and which is seldom mentioned in the comparative study of religions. I have in mind here the practical methods by which Christianity is applied. The real value of a religion, as a matter of fact, depends not only upon its teachings, but also upon its teachers. There is perhaps more contrast between the different religions in their practice than in their theory. Islam, for instance, is in theory opposed to sensuality; but in reality it does almost nothing to stop it. Christians no doubt are often sensual; but not only does Christian teaching forbid it: Christian teachers strenuously and actively oppose it and take every measure in their power to guard the young against it. It is all very well to say that the Moslems need none of our missionaries, and that if they would practice their own religion they would be a very good lot. Who is there to induce them to practice it? Their own leaders do not really try to do so. Shall the missionary, then, undertake it? And shall he preach to them Islam or the religion in which he himself heart and soul believes? The greatest weakness of the non-Christian religions, as I think our study of

them in the preceding chapters has shown, is not so much the lack of noble thoughts and high ideals, but rather the almost complete lack of any efficient system or institution for communicating those ideas and ideals, and the hampering effects of a superstitious conservatism that puts the letter before the spirit. Not one of the religions studied has as yet any universal and efficient system of religious education. With most of them what the children shall learn of their religion is left largely to chance, and chance usually sees to it that they learn the least valuable parts. Consider, moreover, the authoritative scriptures of the various religions — the sources, as they maintain, of their highest ideals and noblest conceptions. I have not in mind here a comparison of them with the Bible — though that would be disadvantageous enough for all of them: I mean here merely to remind the reader that almost all of these books are practically inaccessible because quite unintelligible to the great majority of those who found their faiths upon them. The authoritative scriptures and the prayers and ritual of the Hindus are, for the most part, in Sanskrit; those of the Jainas in Sanskrit and Prakrit; the Granth of the Sikhs is in ancient Punjabi; the Koran is in Arabic; the Avesta of the Parsees in Zend; and the Pitakas of the Buddhists in Pali. All of these are dead languages, languages which only the few learned ones understand. And translations, though they sometimes exist, are rarely used. What sort of spiritual pabulum is this for the hungry soul? And not only so, but the non-Christian religions are notably ill-provided with professional workers in the cause of religion and morals. It is nobody's business to take an interest in the moral welfare of the community and of its various individual members. Each man must look out for himself with little help from others. To be sure, there is something corresponding to our clergy in most of the non-Christian religions; but consider them. The Buddhists and Jainas have monks who do a little educational work of a primitive sort and who sometimes preach an occasional sermon — but who for the most part are too busy saving their own souls to look out for any one else's. The Mohammedans have no clergy at all — only a kind of combination reader and janitor whose work is confined to the mosque. The

Parsee priests are the least respected and often the most ignorant members of the community. The Sikh priests do little but read once or twice a day out of an ancient book in an unknown tongue, and spend the rest of the time plying a brush made of peacock feathers and seeking baksheesh. The Hindu gurus are for the most part disseminators of superstition. And the Brahmin priests — of them it were, perhaps, best to say nothing at all. They are as a rule lazy, ignorant, avaricious; their official occupation is pouring water on a lingam, repeating verses a large part of which they do not understand, putting mystic marks on the foreheads of the faithful with cow-dung (for a consideration), and squeezing money from the pious pilgrim. And the rest of the truth about them is hardly fit to print.

Compare with this dearth of all preparedness for nourishing the spiritual life, the admirable equipment which our Christianity brings with it: our Scriptures read in the vernacular at every public service and learned and loved in the home; our Sunday-Schools for the young, our sermons on the higher life for the old; our persistent watchfulness against every kind of moral danger, and our trained and truly devoted clergy, who, in spite of the taunts occasionally leveled at them, do devote their lives to the safeguarding of the morals of the community and the upbuilding of the nobler virtues. Certainly system and institutions and "efficiency" are not everything; but given two religions whose teachings are equally good, the one that has an *organization* like the Christian will have far greater effect on the moral life of the community than will the other, however noble its philosophy, if it be no better provided for actual work than are the non-Christian religions of India. This to my mind is one of the strongest arguments in favor of missions, and one which, as it seems to me, should appeal to every moral man no matter what his view may be of the subtleties of Christian theology. If Christianity, under the guidance of a body of devoted men like our missionaries, were to become the religion of a substantial part of India's population, there can be little doubt of the enormous uplift in moral and social conditions that would be felt throughout the whole land.

How can this be brought about? What is the most promising policy of the missionary enterprise for the achievement of this great aim? On the details of this question I have no opinion and am quite unqualified to speak. The problem has been carefully studied by the gentlemen of the missionary boards and by the missionaries themselves, and discussed with great wisdom at missionary conferences, and it would be presumptuous for me to hazard an opinion as to methods if I had one. There are, however, two questions connected with the general policy of Christian missions on which mere outside observers like the reader and myself have a right to an opinion, and concerning which I should like to offer a few quite commonplace remarks. The questions I have in mind are the attitude of the missionary toward the religions which he seeks to supplant, and his attitude toward Christianity.

As I have already pointed out in an earlier part of this chapter, the missionary's attitude toward the non-Christian religions of India has changed very considerably even in the last twenty-five years. In the old days he thought his first duty was to attack the religion of his hearers with all the violence of which he was capable, and to assure them that hell fire was waiting for all the unbaptized. Missionary literature, whether at home or abroad, was filled with denunciations of the heathen in his blindness — a policy which was due partly to a misconception of the best way of attracting the unregenerate, and partly to real ignorance concerning the finer side of the native religions. Missionary sermons and writings have now quite a different tone. The Christian Literature Society at Colombo, to be sure, is still situated on "Dam Street," but this fact has lost its old significance. Typical of modern missionary books is Howell's recent and excellent work, "The Soul of India," in which the author exhibits at length and with scholarly care the points not of contrast but of *agreement* between Christianity and Hinduism; and typical also is the more recent and more excellent "Crown of Hinduism," by Farquhar, which seeks to demonstrate (as its title signifies) that Christianity has come to India not so much to destroy as to fulfill. The attitude of an increasing number of missionaries is represented by the following wise words which I take from the last

Report of the World's Missionary Conference: "More harm has been done in India than in any other country by missionaries who lacked the wisdom to appreciate the nobler side of the religion which they have labored so indefatigably to supplant. . . . Below the strange form and hardly intelligible language lies life, the spiritual life of human souls, needing God, seeking God, laying hold of God, so far as they have found Him. Until we have at least reached so far that under the ceremonies and doctrines we have found the religious life of the people, we do not know what Hinduism really is."

This new policy of the more liberal missionaries of recognizing generously all that is best in the native religions and building so far as possible on foundations already at hand, instead of seeking to destroy everything in sight, is steadily growing. Thus we would seem to be approaching a reconciliation between Christianity and the Indian religions. And many of the representatives of these religions are willing to go halfway. Especially is this true of the Hindus. Many of them would be glad to accept Christ as one of the numerous expressions of God and of the truth, and to merge Christianity within Hinduism. But here we reach a point beyond which the missionaries are not willing to go. They insist not only upon the acceptance of Christ, but also upon the renunciation of the old gods and of certain of the old customs and the recognition of the distinctive teachings of Christianity. For, as we have seen, they hold that while there is much in common between Christianity and the Indian religions, there are also points of contrast, and that these differences are of very real importance. To many this exclusive attitude of the Christian missionary may seem narrow, but I am convinced that a certain amount of it, at any rate, is justified. If the missionaries should agree to an amalgamation of Christianity with Hinduism, the Christian side of the partnership would soon disappear in the capacious maw of its ever hungry partner. It would be a partnership like that in which the lion and the lamb lie down together, with the lamb inside. Christ would simply be added to the pantheon (which, with its thirty-three million gods, is hardly in need of an addition); or He would be made an eleventh incarnation of Vishnu, and before

many generations all that is distinctively Christian would disappear from India as completely as Buddhism did after Vishnu had swallowed Gautama. There is much that is fine in the Vedanta, and Ramanuja's formulation of it in particular is in some respects strikingly like certain aspects of Christian teaching. One branch of this school, in fact, as we have seen, maintains the freedom of the will. Yet as a practical and actual matter the tendency of Indian thought is to leave quite unemphasized the importance of the individual and his responsibility. And if we are seriously considering a partnership with Vaishnavism we should pay more attention to this almost universal Indian tendency than to the theology of one of its sub-sects. For most Indian theologians, whether Vaishnavite or of any other school, there is little place for personal freedom, for genuine moral struggle and individual achievement, little place for virtue and sin as Christianity conceive them, little place, in short, for real individuality and responsibility. And these are things which Christianity cannot give up without sacrificing all that moral earnestness which is its very life.

But perhaps the chief reason why Christianity cannot afford to let Christ be made an *avatara* of Vishnu is not to be found in its disapproval of Vaishnavite theology, but rather in a realization of the incalculable loss that would result to it — and to humanity — if Christ should be put on a level with the present Vaishnavite incarnations. Not to mention the earlier ones — the fish, tortoise, boar, and the rest — consider the perfectly mythical Rama and the mythical and immoral Krishna (he of the sixteen thousand concubines). The Christian view of the incarnation possesses two inestimable advantages over the Vaishnavite view, advantages which it must cling to at any and every cost — the undoubted historicity of its God-man, and the fact that in both His life and His teachings is to be found the supreme moral ideal.

But if the missionary should and must insist upon keeping the fundamental Christian view unmixed and pure, it does not follow that he should reject all the beliefs and institutions of Indian religions. The attempt to foist Christianity in its present Western garb upon the Indian as a *complete* substi-

tute for his old religion is of doubtful wisdom. There is so much that is fine and genuinely spiritual in the nobler forms of faith native to India that it will be a great pity if some means cannot be found for preserving these within Indian Christianity. Did God, indeed, speak only in Palestine, that his voice is not to be heard in the Upanishads? And is our Western form of Christianity the only proper form? Too often we forget that Jesus himself was an Oriental.[1]

When the Western world was converted to Christianity, it not only adopted the new religion as its own: it *adapted* it to the various needs and desires and ways of thinking already dominant in Europe. Our Western type of intellect, with its love of exact definition, promptly formulated Christianity in various doctrines and dogmas which served their day and generation remarkably well. It is a question, however, whether some of these doctrines have not nearly lost their usefulness in the West; and it is doubly questionable whether the East, whose type of mind is so different from our own, should be made to accept these dogmas as the condition of receiving Christianity. We have seen how great an obstacle some of these ancient dogmas are in the conversion of the more intelligent Indians, and it seems extremely unlikely that we shall ever be able to convert any large number of them to a belief in our mediæval creeds. We must remember that the higher classes of India are not children nor savages; that they are men mostly of our race; and that they not only have an ancient and abstruse philosophy of their own, but that many of them are very wide awake to what is going on in the intellectual world of Europe. They are not to be fooled into supposing that all is peace within the camp of Christendom, nor to be docilely inoculated with views which most of our theological seminaries at home have given up. They read our philosophy and science, they are acquainted with the modern revolt against authority, sometimes they know more about the Higher Criticism than do the missionaries with whom they dispute. If we who have been brought up in an atmosphere of reverence for the old symbols are unable any longer

[1] Cf. Mozoomdar's admirable work, *The Oriental Christ.* (Boston, George H. Ellis, 1898.)

to accept them in the old way, is it likely that the intelligent Indians, to whom our symbols are strange and some of our dogmas unintelligible, will ever be converted to a vital belief in these things? I would not for a moment suggest a doubt as to whether Christ has a message for these Indians, and one which they can accept and understand and which they need. He has a message for all of them, for the highest as well as the lowest. But I am not sure that the Nicene Fathers have.

But even if it were possible to persuade these men of the truth of our ancient dogmas, would it be desirable to do so? Should we really be doing India a service by converting it to beliefs which we of the West have been giving up these past fifty years and which our own experience shows us are hardly compatible with modern ways of thinking? For we should remember that while Hinduism has inevitably been undermined by the progress of modern thought, it has not been alone in suffering this catastrophe. The scholastic theology of the Middle Ages, part of which we still officially profess, has become almost equally incredible to most thinking men. Would it be wise or kind to convert the Indians to views which we know are no longer defensible, even if we could? Consider the pain, the heart-break, the skepticism that we of the West have had to go through these past fifty years in recognizing our lack of genuine belief in certain doctrines that still remain upon our official creeds. Can we seriously wish to put our Indian brothers back where we were fifty years ago, and ask them to go through the same sad and wasteful test?

Probably most of my readers will agree with me that our more conservative missionaries are making a mistake in presenting Christianity in a form which Christendom itself is fast outgrowing. And I personally should go even farther than this, and question whether there are not some doctrines which we who have been brought up within Christian traditions may well cling to, but which it would be unwise to foist upon our Indian converts. Let those who wish to pursue theology study these things, but why teach them as a really essential part of our religion? Can we not wait till we have exhausted the sources of Galilee before turning to Nicæa, and Rome and Geneva and Westminster? Let us seriously ask ourselves

whether it be wise to teach the Indians the various points of "Christology"; the stories from the Old Testament which the "natural man," with a natural conscience, usually finds rather questionable; the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures; the creation of the world out of nothing; God's choice of Israel as His *only* "chosen people"; the Apostolic Succession; the "Plan of Salvation," with its machinery of blood, faith, and grace as "our *only* ground for hope"; the Eternal Damnation of all those not properly "justified"? The reader can fill out the list as well as I. And must we even insist that God's only revelation was made to men of the Hebrew race? Must we teach the Indians that in coming to believe in Christ they must give up all faith in their own revered prophets — Buddha, Mohammed, Zarathustra, and the rest? Must we demand that they surrender their belief in transmigration and the eternal nature of the soul and the inevitable law of moral cause and effect, and that they substitute for it our doctrine that the soul originates at the birth of the body, and at the body's death it goes to an everlasting heaven or hell? Are we, then, so sure of these things ourselves? Or that God must not be called Brahman nor Allah nor Ahura, but spells His name G-O-D?

We have in the mission field a great opportunity, not only for spreading Christianity, but for purifying and strengthening it, an opportunity of freeing it from the dogmas which have served their day and are now no longer of any real service, but must in the future more and more prove fetters and chains in its progress. We have an opportunity of preserving the kernel of Christianity and throwing aside its husk — an opportunity which may serve us not only in "converting the heathen," but in defending all that is really Christian against the assaults of agnosticism at home, and of deepening the spiritual life of Christendom by putting the emphasis at last on the place where Jesus put it. If we take this course and, no longer misled by the spell of ancient symbols, concentrate our efforts on spreading the spirit of Christ, we shall have every reason to be hopeful of the success of Christian missions. If we take the opposite course and, insisting on the substitution of our symbolism for the Indians', seek to nourish

their spiritual life on dogmas which no longer genuinely feed our own, we shall surely fail.

But Christianity shall not fail. It shall not fail because it shall be carried over all the world in hands more worthy than ours, and by men who know that the Kingdom of God cometh not by observation. It may not be under the name "Christian" that His Kingdom shall come, but the true follower of the Master will not greatly care for words and spelling, so that the cause triumphs. He may find that God's ways are not our ways, and that the teachings of Christ take deepest root when the conventional wrappings in which we have covered them are stripped away. And if he finds them grafted on to the old religions and transforming them in everything but name, he will not quarrel with his brother Christian because of their disguise.

Yes, in the large sense at least, the missionary enterprise must succeed, because the spirit of Christ *is* the missionary spirit. Perhaps the greatest reproach of the non-Christian religions is their lack of missionary zeal; and the greatest argument for the superiority of Christianity is the fact that it is supremely *the* missionary religion. One might even go so far as to say that a religion deserves to succeed just in so far as it has the missionary spirit. For the missionary spirit is the spirit of loving service; it is the incarnation of Christianity. Hence it is astounding to find "Christians," as one so often does, who "do not believe in missions." For whereever "Christianity" ceases to be a missionary religion it ceases to be Christian. And if Christianity be taken in the large sense, if, in short, it be identified with the spirit of Christ, whoever loves humanity must wish well to Christian missions, and whoever believes in humanity must have good hopes of the missionary's ultimate success. For Christianity has a message which the non-Christian world cannot do without. And the delivery of this message is the greatest debt that the West owes to the East.

CHAPTER XXI

WHAT THE WEST MIGHT LEARN

THE voyage back from India to Europe is not merely a passage of the body from one continent to another: it is a voyage of the soul among changing psychological climes. And when at last one sets foot upon European soil in some great port, the contrasts of the new with the old that strike one are both material and spiritual. The great superiority of the European laborer, clerk, manager, over the Asiatic in intelligence and efficiency, the marks of centuries of mechanical progress, the care of public health, the evidences of almost superfluous wealth — these are among the things that are first to be noticed. There are other contrasts besides these. One of the first things that I saw on landing was a typical European café. It was a pleasant sight after those many months of impoverished natives and exiled Englishmen. I sat and watched the people at the tables, drinking their beer, sipping their coffee, smoking their cigarettes, and munching their sweets. How fat they were, how well-dressed, how complacent, how *gemüthlich*: in short, how different from an Indian crowd! I asked myself in what this difference consisted. Partly, no doubt, in costume and the loss of color, partly in avoirdupois, in complacency. But I thought the most striking difference between it and a company of Indians was to be found in the appearance of the women and in the attitude of the men toward them. When I looked attentively at the individual women at the tables round me, there could be no doubt who and what many of them were. And the bearing of their male companions made the relation between them quite transparent. I left the café and walked through the crowded streets. Everywhere the same symptoms of the great social disease of the West presented themselves. And I learned anew that an Indian woman with but two small rags may be modestly attired; and a European woman may be indecently clad,

though robed in many metres of costly stuffs. Brought up as we are in the midst of this sort of thing, it is hard for us to understand the feelings of an Asiatic when he first visits Europe. The blatancy with which the social vice is paraded through our city streets comes to him as a kind of blow in the face. I have talked with many Indians who have visited the West, — Hindu, Mohammedan, Buddhist, and Parsee, — and when I asked for their impressions of Europe and America I have discovered almost invariably (in spite of their courteous attempt to soften their words) that the open and widespread immoralities of our cities, our enticing and feeding of depraved tastes, our public indecencies, come to them with a shock that they have never been able to forget. It seems to them almost incredible: — as though on being introduced into a costly palace they found its interior a pigsty.

I do not say there is no social vice in India and no impurity of thought. Of course there is. On certain occasions some of the Indians (like the ancient Greeks) feel called upon to sing indecent songs, even in religious festivals. Many rich natives keep mistresses, and in certain quarters of some of the towns public women are to be found. But no man dares, or cares, to flaunt these women in the public streets, and whenever they appear they are indistinguishable in costume from others.[1] One could easily spend a lifetime in India and never see a woman indecently clad nor one whose actions were in any way immodest. More than that: he might go to the native theater repeatedly and never see an erotic or suggestive play; he might walk the streets and visit the shops endlessly and never see an indecent picture, except those due to European influence. The Indians are relatively naïve and childlike compared with us in the West. The arts of *suggestion* and hidden allusion they have not learned. The sexual life is taken as a matter of course, — quite objectively, — but not gilded and bedecked and sentimentalized and philosophized[2] and gloated over. A missionary who knows them and their language well — and who

[1] A traveled Indian gentleman said to me, "No Indian prostitute would have anything to do with such public obscenities as any one may see in the suburbs of Chicago."

[2] Exception should here be made of certain Vaishnavite and Shakti sects.

certainly holds no brief in their praise — told me that for many years he has listened to their conversation while they (supposing him ignorant of their language) talked quite freely with each other. And never has he overheard an obscene story or a vulgar allusion from them. This may be typical and it may not.[1] What the inner state of the Indian's mind may be I do not know. But I know that he has a sense of outer decency which we of the West might well borrow from him.

We might also borrow from him with some profit his sense of the indecency of drunkenness. For centuries the influence of Hinduism has been exerted against excessive drinking, and Mohammedanism and Buddhism have prohibited intoxicants altogether; and these forces — with other forces allied — have built up a public opinion in all the upper classes of the Indian people against strong drink. European example is, indeed, beginning to break this down; but it is still possible to spend years in India and never see a drunken native.

I cherish no sentimental belief in the superiority of the Oriental. I am not one of those who would keep him unspoiled from all Western influence. The West has a great deal that the East might well learn, and must learn if it is to progress and throw off the chains of very evil custom that make the life of its millions miserable. But I also believe that there are a few things — a very few, perhaps — which the efficient and sagacious "up-to-date" West could afford to imitate from the simple, quiet, antiquated East. It is some of these things — only two or three — that I wish to speak of in this last chapter.

I have already mentioned outward decency, and I shall add to this but one thing more. But how this one thing should be named I am at a loss to say. It is the root from which the Indian's temperance and his sense of public decorum grow. It is not a social custom or any isolated characteristic, but an attitude of mind, rather; a kind of inwardness, a feeling about life and about the world that expresses itself in the man's external bearing and is the inner side of all the virtues that he has. It is a kind of simplicity, a quietness, an innate modesty and lack of self-obtrusiveness — which has, in fact, resulted in a

[1] I am told by another missionary that in Gujarati, where he lives, the Indians are by no means so pure in heart or pure of tongue.

reputation for passivity — an interest in the inner world which in many develops into what might be called a realization of the soul.

The simplicity of the Oriental and his modesty and lack of self-assertiveness give the clue to much of the charm of Indian life. A native village may be unsanitary and unclean, but one never finds in it a touch of vulgarity, just as one may see a coolie clad in a loin-cloth or a woman nursing her baby in the streets and find in neither the slightest suggestion of immodesty. Immodesty and vulgarity are things of the mind, and the naïve simplicity of the Indian make both very rare. This same lack of self-assertiveness and of preoccupation with the thought of worldly gain and of one's own importance make for both quietness and peace. There is little shouting in an Indian street and no fighting. Compared with these Indians we Westerners seem so noisy, so big-footed, so domineering, so conscious of our importance. Doubtless we are important. But a touch of Oriental modesty and quietness and simplicity would not harm us.

It is in part this lack of preoccupation with the thought of self-importance, joined with a fine sensitiveness, that makes the Indian so reluctant to take life. It would be a mistake to say that the Indian is more sympathetic than the European. But he has learned, through centuries of development and from various causes, to have a feeling of repugnance at the thought of *killing* which is quite as comparable to the musician's pain at discord as it is to the moralist's hatred of sin. It is largely this *æsthetic* feeling which is at the bottom of much of the Indian's antipathy to meat-eating. If asked to dine on roast beef, he feels as if his host had said, "Come and eat a dead cow with me!" To him the thought of our Chicago slaughter-houses, with their streams of blood, receiving daily, as they do, thousands of splendid and beautiful creatures in all the pride of health, and sending out in their stead tons of dead carcasses to be devoured by us human animals, — this thought, I say, seems to him simply horrible. This sensitiveness to the bad taste of taking life we Westerners have never yet attained to. We are not far enough away from the hunter stage of æsthetic development. The instinct of the chase, which loves killing for

its own sake, is still strong in us, and the white-livered brown man of India who does not share it with us we think a "molly-coddle." It might be interesting to know what the Indians think of us. It would be especially interesting to know what the Buddhist and the Jaina, with their real sympathy for all living things, would say of us. The contrast of the East and the West on this particular was once brought home to me on a trip down the Irrawaddy. The ship was crowded with Buddhist deck passengers — men and women who had been taught from childhood that the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," includes all forms of animal life, and means real good-will toward all living things. At one of the stations an Englishman came on board, and the contrast between him and the deck passengers was sufficiently striking — the Burmese, living on a purely vegetable diet and drinking only water, low-voiced, courteous in manner, kindly and sympathetic toward every form of life however low; and the big Englishman returning from the hunt with a dozen little dead birds strung along a stick and the skulls of three dead deer as tokens of his great prowess — deer which he had killed not for meat, but for the fun of killing them; his trophies carried behind him by as many meek, barefooted Bengali servants, as he walked proudly along the deck with great steps and large feet, issuing his orders in a loud voice, and later on sitting down to his dinner of fish, mutton, duck, and two courses of beef, accompanied by several glasses of the unfailing whiskey-and-soda. The next day the same contrast was again illustrated. A flock of wild ducks was resting on the waters ahead of us, and when we reached them they rose and flew parallel to our course in graceful lines. It was a charming sight, and we were all watching it, when we heard a *crack* and then another and another. One of the officers of the ship — a fine young Englishman filled with our Anglo-Saxon love of "sport" which is so carefully inculcated upon most of us in our youth by elders and juniors alike — had seen the *game* (but not the beauty), and seized the opportunity. He kept on firing at the ducks till they were far beyond his range. He knew at the start that there was no possibility of getting any of the birds that he might succeed in hitting — the ship would not be stopped for that. He had no thought of

replenishing the larder. He just wanted to kill the ducks for the pleasure of proving his marksmanship, and asserting his will; and also from the hunter's joy in seeing the birds drop with broken wing, flutter into the water, flounder, and drift by, dying or dead. And he surely was a very typical product of our Western culture with its love of self-assertion and its cult of "sport." I understand no Burmese, so could not catch the comments of our "molly-coddle" third-class passengers. Poor things, they are still quite primitive in their ideas and have not yet been educated up to "sport." But if the precept and example of the West are of any avail they shall not long be left thus benighted. Brace up, O Burman! Be a man! Assert yourself! Kill something!

Another aspect of the Eastern lack of self-assertiveness — and perhaps a deeper aspect — is its lack even of self-consciousness. There is a naïveté about the unspoiled Indian which is found in the West only among children — and great men. The Indian is not always asking himself how this or that *will look;* what people will think if he does thus or so. Hence he can be natural in a way that we seldom are.[1] When the proper time of day arrives the Mohammedan falls on his knees, wherever he may be, and prays. He seeks neither to attract attention nor to avoid it. On the village street you see him kneeling, on the vessel's deck, in the fields, on the hillside. The fact that you stand in front of him staring neither pleases nor disquiets nor embarrasses him. He is sure that it is good to pray at the appointed hours, and quite as natural as to breathe the air. But this would be *impossible* for a Westerner. If one of us should try it, every one would be sure it was a "pose." And this because we Westerners have for centuries cultivated a habit of acting before the mirror. In place of the spontaneous and unreflecting good taste that more primitive peoples, like the Indian, possess, we have cultivated a complex and artificial decorum which almost banishes true naturalness from our possibilities. It is one of the most difficult things in the world for us to be simple: only the great succeed. And the root of our

[1] An exception should be made of the Buddhist monk, whose constant preoccupation with "selflessness" and merit make him at times stiffly self-conscious.

almost unconquerable stiffness and artificiality is the thought of self. It was in this that both Jesus and Buddha found the root-evil of mankind. Not only is it "self whereby we suffer." It is self whereby we sin and self whereby we are ridiculous. There is so much in our Western world to remind us constantly of ourselves that the exhortation, "Forget yourself," is almost impossible of fulfillment. Yet in a sense that is the final task of all self-culture. "Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

The self-consciousness of the West and its self-assertiveness result in what every Eastern visitor calls our "materialism." When one first begins reading Oriental journals or talking with intelligent Orientals about the West, he comes upon one of the many surprises that are ever awaiting the Westerner in the East. He expects that the Oriental will be quite as dazzled with the brilliancy of our Western material civilization as we at home are. He finds a very different view of things. The Oriental admits our cleverness and inventiveness, our power, wealth, and luxury. But he refuses to be dazzled. And not only so. He tells us also that our mechanical devices, our wealth and luxury, are fetters that bind our souls. This is a surprise, indeed: for many of us Westerners are astounded that the "heathen" should know about the soul at all, and a still larger number of us have forgotten — or have never heard — that there was such a thing. Yet the Indian will insist upon this point. "You Westerners," he will say, "have built a Moloch that is now devouring you. You accuse the East of worshiping stocks and stones, and perhaps this is true: — but is it any nobler to worship silver and gold? You are the servants of *things;* the slaves of a convention which measures respectability by possession. You cram your houses with things — costly or cheap — and then build greater houses to store more things; you cover your backs and load your bodies with them, to make a show, and when you have worn them five times the fashion has changed and they must be thrown aside. With thirty gowns your women are wretched because they have nothing to wear! And you not only stuff your wardrobes, your houses and barns, your cities, your lands and the very seas with an endless load of things: you stuff your minds and hearts

with them. You have no time to think of the Invisible, nor any real faith in it. You cannot learn to love the Eternal, for *things* have blinded your eyes and stopped your ears. With wonderful energy you have banished the fear of the snake and of the pestilence; but you have made for yourselves a terror more terrible than they. *You are afraid to be poor.* You are so convinced that a man's life consisteth in the multitude of the things that he possesseth that you have almost identified poverty with disgrace. And on the other hand, the wealth that you gain (and unquestionably you are good at that business!) — the wealth that you do gain brings you little satisfaction. So that your whole life is a race after something you know not what. You do not know what you want and you will not take the time even to ask the question. Doubtless the East has failed of gaining its end because it has not used the proper means: but the West has been so busy providing itself with means that it has no end and aim at all."

Whatever may be the truth of this accusation against the West, certain it is, at any rate, that the East has always known exactly what it most supremely desired, and in the pursuit of its ideal it has never been afraid of poverty or of anything else. Bodily comforts it has despised, and bodily suffering it has even welcomed if by such means the soul might profit. The history of Indian asceticism forms, indeed, a sad story, and the sights one finds along the Ganges are sometimes revolting enough. Yet in this ideal of crucifying the flesh for the sake of the spirit there is something noble, and hidden under the unpleasing aspect of Indian self-denial and mortification there is a rather fine protest against our Western pampering of the body and our constant preoccupation with its comfort. It is easy for us, no doubt, to smile at the poor Jaina pulling all his hairs out one by one and starving himself to death at the end in order to attain Moksha and free his soul from the fetters of the flesh; and doubtless the Jaina is mistaken in his choice of the means. But is there not something truly fine in his earnest seeking after the end, his profound faith in the spiritual, and his scorn of the material when it stands in his soul's way? How many of us believe in our souls deeply enough to starve our bodies to death for the soul's sake? Nay, I fear there are some of us,

with all our Christian professions, who would hesitate to give up regularly one of our three meals a day, or to pull out so much as ten hairs, in order to redeem our souls from their slavery to a world of things. Our souls may take their chance, but at all costs there must be no physical suffering! How much of our time and our best thought goes to the preparation of purely physical comforts — foods of the right flavor, clothes of the right cut, houses of the right temperature, and the rest, so that many of us have no time to think of greater things! How this softness of the West, this coddling of the flesh is rebuked by the stern austerities of India! How cheap it all becomes at the sight of the sannyasi who has renounced everything for the culture of his soul!

For the culture of the soul has been, and is still, the one great ideal of India. Conquest, government, money-making, pleasure, the things that have occupied the chief attention of the West, have been for India of very secondary importance. The jutting rocks and mountain passes of Europe are crowned with the frowning walls of mediæval castles and modern fortresses; in India there are but few castles, and the forts are of European building. But every little hill has its temple, and the mountain passes are the dwellings of the gods. At Pagan, in Burma, the eastern bank of the Irrawaddy is lined for many miles with pagodas of every shape and size and color. Ten thousand of them there are, altogether, and they have been pointing upward these many centuries to remind all who pass of him who taught the Buddhist world that the one thing supremely worth while was not to be found in material possessions, but in the life of the spirit. These pagodas are the embodiment of the intense conviction and the supreme ideal of the East. Opposite them, on the western bank of the river, are other structures. These have been built by the West, — and shall I say that they express *its* deepest conviction and ideals? They are of iron, these Western productions, angular, ugly, but very useful. They are useful, namely, in the extraction of petroleum from the ground; for these are oil wells. Doubtless a great deal of good stone was wasted in the construction of the pagodas; and how shall we assess the cash value of an ideal? But oil is oil, and we know its market price.

"Beauty of place," writes Sister Nivedita, "translates itself to the Indian consciousness as God's cry to the soul. Had Niagara been situated on the Ganges, it is odd to think how different would have been its valuation by humanity. Instead of fashionable picnics and railway pleasure-trips, the yearly or monthly incursion of worshiping crowds; instead of hotels, temples; instead of ostentatious excess, austerity; instead of the desire to harness its mighty forces to the chariot of human utility, the unrestrained longing to throw away the body, and realize at once the ecstatic madness of Supreme Union. Could contrast be greater?" [1]

As this quotation itself suggests, the methods that India has used for the culture of the soul have not always been wise. But she has at least maintained her ideal consistently through the centuries. Not the Master of Industry with his millions, not the Boss of Big Business, has roused her enthusiasm and thrilled her imagination; this has been done only by the sannyasi, going out from house and home, with no possession but his begging-bowl, to be alone with God.

Nor is this a thing of the past in India. The soul and its culture are still the first care of men of every cult. Worship and contemplation are still the great occupation — I do not say the great duty, but the great *opportunity* — of life. A friend of mine in Calcutta has a servant and a clerk. The servant spends every spare hour of his twenty-four worshiping at the shrine of Kali; and the clerk — a man still under forty — is saving his money so that in a year or two he may leave his family well provided and wander forth as a sannyasi to spend the rest of his days in meditation. To us Westerners this seems incomprehensible, and doubtless it is extreme. But it is not merely its extreme form that seems to us so strange. The very notion of contemplation has become to us both unintelligible and unendurable. We cannot even with Walt Whitman loaf and invite our souls. We cannot — or rather will not — invite our souls because in the first place some of us doubt whether we have any, and in the second, many of us would be bored or rather frightened if our souls should accept the invitation. We say we have no *time* for contemplation — we

[1] *The Web of Indian Life*, p. 262.

have too much to do to spend our minutes in that fashion; but this is an evasion. The truth is we do not know how to meditate and are afraid to learn. Extra time we have — plenty of it; but what do we do with it? Some of us pick up a book, others go to the theater or to a moving-picture show, according to our taste, and if nothing else offers we can at least find some one to talk with — or talk to; not that we want to exchange ideas, but that we don't want to be alone with ourselves. Varied as our respective pastimes are, they have this in common: they are all "*diversions.*" We want to be *diverted.* Diverted from what? From our business and our cares, no doubt, but also from all serious thoughts. I question whether there is one man in fifty of us who would be willing to be alone and quiet and awake and without a book for ten minutes. We are afraid to be alone. We are afraid to think. What is there to think about? we ask. The Indian would regard this as a preposterous question. What is there to think about? — God and the Soul — the old questions of Whence? and Whither? — and most of all the question, What for? Are not these enough to occupy a few minutes of every day? The sannyasi finds them too much for a lifetime. Our American attitude, in contrast with the sannyasi's, is one of headless "hustle." It is well expressed in that very American song, —

"I don't know where I'm goin',
But I'm on my way."

Rabindranath Tagore said to me, "You Americans have no leisure, or if you have, you know not how to use it. In the rush of your lives you do not stop to consider where you are rushing to nor what it is all for. The result is that you have lost the vision of the Eternal."

The Indian has not lost this vision. He has lost many other things; is without many things that are of very great value. He is poor and diseased, famine-stricken, ignorant, a prey to the tiger and the snake, full of sores and sufferings and superstitions; yet some divine vision of the Invisible, some inarticulate intuition of the Eternal, has ever hung about him and is still brooding over his land. Of individual Indians and individual Westerners I do not write. There are many, many Europeans and Americans who have not lost the vision of the

Eternal, and many Indians who have. I speak only of ideals in the large. But certain it is that purely material aims play a much more important rôle in the West than in the East. In India they really take the soul seriously; with us one is almost ashamed to mention it outside of church.

This contrast of mental attitude is partly reflected in, and partly caused by, the philosophy and science of the two peoples. The intellectual prestige of our age in the West lies with physics and chemistry. It is they that have won the great triumphs, wrought the modern miracles, and brought to man the gifts whose cash value none can dispute. Hence biology and physiology have sought to follow in their wake and to adopt and adapt their formulæ. Hence also psychology, the youngest of the family, is trying to shine in their reflected light and to keep some sort of company with the great by taking its point of view from biology, and forcing all its facts into physiological formulæ which are to be ultimately interpreted in terms of chemistry and physics. In such a science there is, of course, no room for the soul or self, no place for freedom or the life of the spirit. The brain and the nervous system, the white and gray matter with their marvelous molecules, obeying always and only the laws of motion, — these have taken the place of the soul and of God. Our philosophy, on its part, is hopelessly divided against itself — so divided, in fact, that we cannot be said to have a philosophy. Some of it is busy justifying and applauding the tyranny of "Naturalism" and the triumphant progress of what might be called *Pan-mechanism.* Much of it is wandering and lost in the mazes of the "Theory of Knowledge," remote from all possible abodes of men. Some of it is calling out in brave protest against the tendencies of the times, and reasserting the old truth that the life for man is the life of the spirit.

The philosophical systems of India also are varied; yet all those native to it have certain great conceptions in common. If these common conceptions should be formulated in an Indian creed it would read in part somewhat as follows: "I believe in the Soul. I believe in its endless progress as it takes its way through changing forms, in worlds that rise and pass. I believe that the material world, with all it has of luxury and

wealth, and with it the human body itself, are but means in the education and refinement of the soul, and that whenever they stand in the way of the soul's progress they must be renounced and despised." And to this, the overwhelming majority of Indian thinkers would add: "I believe that the human soul may enter into, or is already and forever in, immediate communion with the Divine."

I do not think we can accept any of the philosophies of India *in toto* as the solution of our intellectual problems. I am sure we cannot accept any of its religions as such. And yet I think there is something for us in Eastern thought and Eastern life, and something of the highest value. One of the leading philosophers of India writes me as follows: "I am not very hopeful about the future of 'Hinduism' as such. But I do pray fervently that its inmost spirit, its Atma-vidya, its science of the Soul, may not be lost altogether, and that its Theory of Life may pass to new races and younger and more vigorous peoples."

Doubtless the East has more to learn from us than we from the East. And certainly the best that it has to give we might have gained from our own Great Teacher if we only would. But the fact remains that we have not learned our lesson. And it may be that the spiritual teachings of Jesus would come home to us with greater power and a fresh sense of reality if we should consent to study the living example of a people of our own day who, in spite of laboratories, microscopes, and the survival of the fittest, have never for a moment suspected that the laws of matter could explain — or explain away — the self; and who, despite coal-mines, corporations, stocks, bonds, and oil wells, have never lost their calm faith that the spiritual life alone is of supreme value, and that in comparison with it wealth, fame, power, and pleasure are as the small dust of the balance. For the Indian knows that all these pass away, while for each of us the only eternally abiding thing is his own soul.

"What is the light of man?" was a question asked of the sage Yajnavalkya by a certain king some eight hundred years or more before Christ.

And, as one of the ancient Upanishads [1] tells us, the sage at

[1] Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV, 3.

first gave the obvious reply: "The sun, O King; for having the sun alone for his light man sits, moves about, does his work, and returns."

But this did not satisfy the King, and he asked: "When the sun is set, O Yajnavalkya, what is the light of man?"

And again the obvious answer was made: "When the sun is set, then the moon is the light of man; for having the moon alone for his light man sits, moves about, does his work, and returns."

"But when the sun is set, and the moon is set, what is the light of man?"

And once more Yajnavalkya answered, and this time quite in the spirit of modern applied science: "When the sun is set, and the moon is set, then fire is the light of man; for having fire alone for his light man sits, moves about, does his work, and returns."

But the recurring question came again: "When the sun is set, and the moon is set, and the fire is gone out, what is the light of man?"

To this there is but one reply; and Yajnavalkya gave it at last:—

"When the sun is set, and the moon is set, and the fire is gone out, the soul is the light of man."

THE END

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